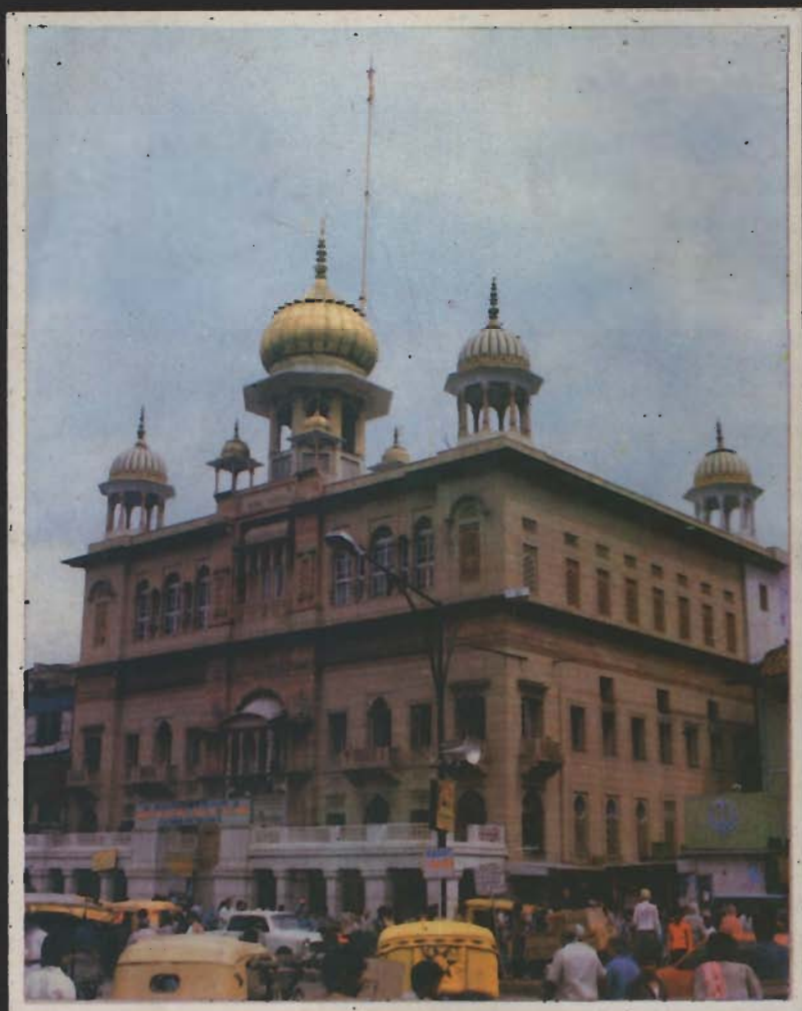


MARTYRDOM OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR

Message for Mankind



Gurdwara Sis Ganj

Surjit Singh Chawla

**DEDICATED
TO**

My revered Mother
KARTAR KAUR CHAWLA
who breathed her
last in a Gurdwara
while listening to
the hymns in praise
of the
Lord

Foreword

Guru Tegh Bahadur laid down his life in defence of humanism on November 11, 1675 at Chandni Chowk, Delhi. On the spot which the Guru sanctified with his blood, now stands Gurdwara Sis Ganj. This memorial to the great Guru points to the invincibility of human soul and the vulnerability of temporal authority.

The martyrdom of the Guru aimed at protecting the Hindus from persecution at the hands of Aurangzeb who wanted to convert them forcibly to Islam. In Bachitra Natak Guru Gobind Singh, paid a glowing tribute to his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur:-

Tilak janju rakha prabh taaka
Kino bado kalu mahe saaka
Sadhan het itti jin kari
Sis diya par see na uchri
Dharm het saaka jin Kiya
Sis diya par sirrar na diya

(The lord protected their paste mark and sacred thread
He performed a mighty deed in Kal Yug
He spared no sacrifice to defend the righteous.
He gave away his head but did not utter a groan
He laid down his life for the sake of Dharma
He sacrificed his life but not his ideal.)

The Sikhs have a glorious history and a broad based spiritual tradition which combines vastness of vision with spirit of self sacrifice and opposition to injustice and oppression. The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur added yet another glorious chapter to the Sikh spiritual tradition. The Guru was the very embodiment of compassion. He had risen above the compulsions of ego. He had a transcendental sensibility. Intergity alone mattered for him. He had overcome the fear

of death. When the Brahmins from Kashmir and other parts of India sought his protection, he promised to help them. He kept up his promise by laying down his life in defence of their right to religious freedom.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur has a message of abiding importance for the whole of mankind. Human beings have yet to develop a system of social organisation which combines social cohesion with individual freedom. But a sensible social system must guarantee individual freedom and social harmony. It must put an end to the desire for domination because domination promotes fear and debases people spiritually. On the spiritual level it is excessive attachment with worldly possessions, power and pelf which turns men into cowards. In the ultimate analysis, it is moral power alone which ensures freedom to the individual and keeps the social system in good health. The Guru laid down his life in defence of the weak and the helpless people of India. By doing so he proved that freedom from fear, detachment and freedom from the desire to dominate others can end exploitation, injustice and oppression.

The great Gurus were visionaries. They believed in the oneness of mankind. They could see the Divine Spirit moving through all things, all phenomena and all the creatures. Their hearts overflowed with compassion and kindness. They aimed at elevating men spiritually by freeing them from the stranglehold of the elemental impulses of anger, lust greed attachment and pride. These impulses compel men to live at the animal level. The Sikh Gurus believed that human beings have the capacity for spiritual transformation. This faith is the fountainhead of their everlasting optimism. They considered different religions as diverse paths which can help in individual purification and social transformation.

Guru Tegh Bahadur has taught us that humility is the antidote to the poison of pride. Contentment negates greed. Self discipline breaks the bonds of lust. Detachment gives us objectivity and frees the mind from the fury of anger . The

ego must be tamed. Renunciation is not necessary for spiritual salvation. Individual salvation is not enough. Spiritually liberated persons must work for promoting social harmony. Man must endeavour to achieve equipoise. Only spiritually liberated men can enrich the quality of individual and social life.

As a visionary the Guru believed that the Creator holds the entire cosmos in an eternal embrace of love. Love brings people together. When love rises above the constraints of ego it becomes compassion which sustains religious sensibility and promotes the desire to do good to others. It ends duality and becomes the basis as well as the outcome of the mystic vision of life.

Compassion was at the core of Guru Tegh Bahadur's decision to oppose Aurangzeb's religious fanaticism. The Guru wanted to alleviate the sufferings of the Hindus who were groaning under the atrocities inflicted on them by Aurangzeb. The Guru defended the Hindus but he was not opposed to either Muslims or Islam

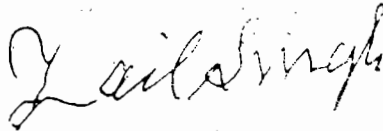
Professor Chawla has done well to emphasise this aspect of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, was an assertion of Indian people's opposition to fanaticism and theocracy. We must keep in mind the fact that Aurangzeb's fanaticism was directed not only against the Hindus. He was equally cruel to non-Sunni Muslims and tortured many Muslim saints as well and ordered the execution of quite a number of them.

By sacrificing his life for the Hindus, the Guru has for all times to come, highlighted the Hindu Sikh affinities. He has also revealed to us his concept of the relation between religion and politics.

Today we tend to identify religions with sectarian communal identities. We speak of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism and generally focus our attention on those aspects of these religious systems which distinguish their adherents from one another. We tend to ignore the fact that dharma means

duties which must be performed by us in accordance with broad-based universalist ethical values and not in accordance with dogmatic, sectarian considerations of communal gain or loss. Politics must be subordinated to ethics. Instead of talking of politics and religion, we must talk of politics and ethics. The state must be guided by the highest ethical considerations and work for the welfare of its citizens. It must ensure fairplay and equality among individuals and harmony among different communities.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur teaches us to overcome fanaticism with tolerance. It is the greatest argument in favour of secularism. It tells us that the secular sensibility alone can lead to the establishment of an ethically sound social and political system. The philosophy of Guru Tegh Bahadur can surely rejuvenate us spiritually and socially.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Zail Singh'.

ZAIL SINGH

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book is a humble homage to the sacred memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur. I have, with all my limitations, honestly tried to understand and interpret the mission and message of the seventeenth century Saviour, Guru Tegh Bahadur. His martyrdom has an everlasting significance for the entire mankind, specially for the people of India and more specifically the Sikhs. They must have an unambiguous and objective understanding of their glorious spiritual heritage. I have tried to place Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom in the context of Sikh history, Sikh spiritual tradition and the evolution of the Sikh psyche. I do not claim to have said the last word. I have simply presented a point of view which is open to discussion and correction. I fervently hope that we try to understand our heritage and are steadfast in being faithful to the traditions of idealism and altruism which have been sanctified by our Gurus with their own blood.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was a multi-faceted genius. The focus in this book, has been on issues involved in the act of the Supreme sacrifice of the Saviour. He was not only a martyr and a prophet, he was also a great poet. His hymns deal with the pathos of human predicament. Despite the fact that he talks of the Impermanence of life and the unreality of human passions and possessions, his hymns have been a source of spiritual succour and solace to millions of men and women in their hour of personal grief and affliction. He heightens our awareness of the ephemeral nature of the material phenomena but instead of creating a sense of despair and depression, elevates the human mind and imbues it with the hope which permeates the cosmos. He fortifies our faith in human nature and makes it possible for us to rise above the irritants of the immediate problems of existence and keep our attention focussed on the everlasting and the eternal. I hope to present a detailed account of the poetic creation of Guru Tegh Bahadur in the near future.

Of course, the poetic aspect of the personality of Guru

Tegh Bahadur cannot be separated from the mystic, visionary dimensions of his personality. Human personality is an integral whole. This is specially true of the personality of a visionary who tries to understand reality in its totality. Not only so, a visionary's understanding of reality transcends the limits of time and space. He is always able to rise above the constraints on understanding which a pragmatic consideration of the present puts on human thinking. While reacting to the immediate problems of human existence he keeps in mind the considerations which have a distant relevance in the context of the ultimate.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's mystic vision is the basis of his poetic experience and expression. His attitude to life and its problems is a projection of his poetic sensibility. The compassion of the poet, the vision of the mystic and the insight of a man who has understood the currents, cross currents and compulsions of the socio-political religious reality, are the integral ingredients of his moral decision to come to the rescue of the harassed Hindus who sought refuge with him and asked for protection.

Such a complex phenomenon as the martyrdom of the Guru requires inter-disciplinary approach. I have tried to apply my understanding (limited though it is) of history, literature and the Sikh spiritual tradition, to study this complex phenomenon which encompasses within its orbit state-citizen relations, socio-political power equations, the conflict of ideologies and theological concepts. It is worth knowing as to what were the compulsions which made Aurangzeb follow the policy of religious bigotry and fanaticism. We must at the same time try to understand the nature of moral considerations on the part of the Guru which resulted in his intervention on behalf of the victims of Aurangzeb's theological aggression and intolerance. This intervention was the immediate reason for his persecution and execution.

Faith, it is said, moves mountains. It was Guru Tegh Bahadur's faith in the correctness of his point of view which

made it possible for him to singlehandedly oppose the mighty Emperor, Aurangzeb. The Guru had faith in the universalist value of tolerance. He had the courage of his convictions. He laid down his life to stem the onslaught of socio-political forces which debase human sensibility. His martyrdom teaches us that we should never allow our faith to degenerate into fanaticism. Religious belief and practice must contribute to the purification of individual and social life. The man of faith must sublimate his ego; otherwise his faith is bound to degenerate into the formation of sectarian, fanatic attitudes which are the root cause of communal conflicts, social, political chaos, moral decay and debasement.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the Guru of the Sikhs. He laid down his life for the protection of the Hindus who were the victims of a Muslim theocratic state. But he did not hate the Muslims. Owing to the vastness of his vision and the catholicity of his view-point, he did not identify Aurangzeb's fanaticism with Islam and the Mughal state headed by Aurangzeb with the Muslims.

The purpose of this book is to focuss attention on the universalist anti-sectarian aspects of the Sikh movement, the essential humanism of the Sikh Gurus and the combination of the spirituality and militancy in the Sikh tradition.

I am grateful to Giani Zail Singh for writing the foreword.

This book could not have been completed without the help and active co-operation of my friends, Professor Harmeet Singh, Principal Brij Lal Hans, Shri Rajindra Singh Bedi professor Harnam Singh and S.Piara Singh M.A. I was guided in working out the scheme for this book by professor Harnam Singh. He checked the manuscript and made many alterations. Shri Rajinder Singh Bedi went through the draft and made many

significant corrections. S.Piara Singh has rendered valuable help in proof reading.

I am indebted to my colleagues, Dr. Tejpal Singh, Dr. Karanjit Singh, Dr. Bhajan Singh, and Dr. Jaspal Singh with whom I have been discussing the various issues. Dr. Tejpal Singh was kind enough to correct the manuscript and made many valuable suggestions. However the responsibility for the views expressed in this book is entirely mine.

I am extremely thankful to S.Sarjit Singh Randhawa, Additional Principal of our college, under whose guidance I worked for over four years as president of the Divinity Society of the college. It helped me in thinking on the various aspects of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom.

I must thank our college Librarian Mrs. S.Kanwal for her co-operation. I am deeply obliged to S.J.S. Anand Librarian Bhai Vir Singh Sahit Sadan, New Delhi for providing insightful information and suggesting most relevant books on the subject.

Last but not the least, I must express my gratitude to my wife, Bhajan Kaur Chawla, for her forebearance which carried me through this venture.

Surjit Singh Chawla.

NEW DELHI.
DECEMBER 1990.

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Chit Charan Kamal ka asra

Chit Charan Kamal ka asra
 Chit Charan Kamal sang joriaye
 Mann loche buryian,
 Guru Shabdi eh mann horiaye.
 Banh jinhan di pakriaye
 Sir dije banh na chhoriaye.
 Gur Tegh Bahadur bolia,
 Dhar paiyai, dharam na chhodiaye.

Chand Bhatt.

'Make the Lord's lotus feet thy main stay.
 Merge thy mind with the mind eternal.
 Mind's wanderthirst takes it into alleys of evil.
 Stem the evil's rot.
 With wise words of Guru's thought.
 Betray not those who sought your protection.
 Be steadfast unto the last.
 THUS SPAKE GURU TEGH BAHADUR
 Forsake not thy convictions
 Let thy life be lost."

These lines by Chand Bhatt clearly convey the convictions which lie at the core of Guru Tegh Bahadur's vision. Man's spiritual strength comes from a complete submission to the Divine Will which permeates the cosmos. Ego is the root cause of all evil. It can be sublimated by listening to the exhortations of the Guru. Integrity emanates from convictions. One must learn to suffer for one's convictions. Faith alone matters. Body is of no consequence.

INTRODUCTORY

ISSUES INVOLVED

The popular perception regarding the purpose of the supreme sacrifice made by Guru Tegh Bahadur is that he laid down his life for securing for the Hindus the freedom to follow the faith of their forefathers. The Hindus have never been in doubt regarding the great debt they owe to Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh.

This perception is basically correct. It is a historical fact that the persecuted Brahmins from Kashmir and other centres of Hindu pilgrimage, sought the protection of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Guru decided to stand by them in their hour of crisis. He made up his mind to defy the authority of Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb, knowing fully well the likely consequences of such a decision. He had the mental make up of a martyr and decided to court death to secure for the Hindus the freedom of religious belief and practice.

But the term Hindu Dharma need not be identified with the popular Brahmanical, polytheist perception of Divinity, caste based social stratification and meaningless ritualism.

The Guru's martyrdom was, in fact, in defence of the authentic Indian tradition of tolerance and recognition of different systems of thought and perception and the time honoured practice which denied the ruler the right to enforce his religious ideas on his subjects. These traditional decencies and niceties were in danger of being destroyed as a result of the ruthless pursuit of Aurangzeb's religious policies.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur has a multi-dimensional significance. He protected the right of the Hindus to adhere to the faith of their fore-fathers. At the same time he made a heroic attempt at stemming the tide of fanaticism and sanctified with his own blood the ideal of religious tolerance enshrined in the Indian spiritual tradition.

He offered non-violent opposition to the tyranny of a theocratic state and thus strengthened the secular orientation in the Indian political thought. He fought against fanaticism and stood for state neutrality with regard to the religious beliefs and practices of the citizens. His martyrdom was, in that age of intolerance, the knock of modernity on the citadels of religious intolerance and obscurantist ideas. He laid down his life for upholding the values of social harmony, spiritual freedom and the validity of all faiths as diverse paths for self-realisation through self-purification.

Mystics have a vision of life which is holistic, intuitive, integrated and inclusive. They seek and perceive the element of harmony in the cosmic scheme. Guru Tegh Bahadur was a mystic visionary. He was a mystic as well as a revolutionary. He was a yogi as well as a prince. He was a saint as well as a soldier. He had the detachment of a recluse and the compassion of the man of emotional intensity who loves the world he lives in. He was a poet who had delved deep into the pathos of human predicament but had the objectivity of a philosopher who had attained the state of egolessness. His mind was eternally absorbed in the divine but he was not oblivious of the reality of human life and had a correct awareness of the socio-political religious reality of the times in which he lived. His consciousness of the transience of life and the worthlessness of human possessions, did not give way to pessimism but made him think in terms of attaining higher spiritual consciousness and equipoise—a state of mind with transcendental attributes, which obliterates the fear of death. His withdrawal into the seclusion of the meditation cell strengthened his desire to fulfil his commitment to purification of individual and social life. His confrontation with Aurangzeb had nothing partisan and egoistic about it. It was a mystic's assertion of his quest for harmony and higher reality in human life. His sense of dignity was firmly rooted in humility. His opposition to the arrogance of a mighty Emperor emanated from a state of egolessness. He came to the rescue of the people of India groaning under the burden of atrocities, inflicted on

them by an unjust, tyrannical, theocratic state headed by a fanatic. He did not stand for supplanting Muslim theocracy with a non-Muslim theocracy.

Despite the fact that the Guru's martyrdom helped the Hindus in preserving their religious identity, our perception of the martyrdom of the Guru needs transcending the context of the growing Hindu-Muslim confrontation and the threat which such confrontation posed to the Hindu cultural, religious and spiritual traditions. Of course, this was a real threat as Aurangzeb's campaign did aim at turning India into another Egypt, Afghanistan, Syria or Iran by obliterating every vestige of Indian culture and spiritual traditions. His martyrdom did help in the survival and resurgence of Hinduisim but the protection he offered, did not, in any way mean an acknowledgement of social or spiritual superiority of Brahmins, or an assertion of his faith in the plethora of Brahmanical ritualism. It should not also be viewed as a link in the chain of endeavours on the part of Sikhs to emerge as a political power.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's act of opposition to Aurangzeb, being an act of a religious man's defiance of the imperial authority could not but have political implications. It did have an indelible impact on the evolution of the Sikh psyche. It provided the rationale for the creation of the Khalsa and the Khalsa did contribute to the downfall of the Mughal power. The Sikh struggle for survival and sovereignty in the 18th century led to the creation of Sikh militancy and popular perception that the Sikh religion cannot be separated from politics. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan, the creation of the Miri-Piri tradition, the institution of Akal Takht, the battles fought by Guru Hargobind, the persecution and execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur did lead to the militant transformation of the Sikh movement and the Sikh psyche.

This transformation is a historical fact.

But the martyrdom of the Guru should be placed in the context of the totality of Sikh ethos.

To me the martyrdom of the ninth Guru was the culmination of the process initiated by the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, who, when he was enlightened, gave a cryptic expression to his concept of oneness of mankind by saying, 'There is neither Hindu, nor Musalman'. Guru Nanak's perception was the harbinger of the Sikh ethical orientation which the Sikh Gurus were to give to the Sikh spiritual tradition. In Sikhism the emphasis is on ethics. As a matter of fact, ethics is the very quintessence of the Sikh system. Guru Nanak's belief in the oneness of mankind was to become the very foundation of the universalistic emphasis in the Sikh value system. Sikhism transcends sectarian constraints. For the Sikh Gurus Islam and Islamic state were not identical. Similarly they did not identify obsolete ritualism of the Brahmins with the Hindu spiritual system. The Muslim state under Aurangzeb was a theocracy and subordinated religion to politics and used the state for proselytising purposes. The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur makes his disapproval of such a scheme of things obvious. If Islamic theocracy is not justified, any other theocracy by any other name is also not justified. When we talk of the combination of politics with religion in the Sikh system we must talk of the higher universalistic aspects of the Sikh ethos and not in terms of exclusive theocratic considerations. If the Sikh ethos justifies the subordination of religion to politics, there could have been no reason for Guru Tegh Bahadur to go to the extent of laying down his life for opposing the theocratic rule and fanatic zeal of Aurangzeb.

Efforts have been made to present Aurangzeb as a man of piety. His austere life style has been lauded. We are, however, not concerned with his personal piety but with his politics. He was a thorough bigot, otherwise he would not have ordered the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. As a pious man he should not have ordered the execution of a number of Muslim divines like Sarmad or tried to regiment the life of Muslims or put restrictions on the ritual practices of Bohra and Khoja Muslims. As a matter of fact there is no incompatibility between personal piety and religious zeal. The line separating

fundamentalism and fanaticism is a thin line. The religious zeal of Aurangzeb could manifest itself in his iconoclastic proclivities as well as his acts of personal piety.

The Sikh system is basically a broad based, universalistic, humanistic and non-partisan, ethically oriented system of thought with a powerful anti-authoritarian stance. It recognises people's right to revolt against unjust authority. It allows even recourse to the use of arms. But even this revolt against unjust authority must not succumb to emotional imbalance which gives way to the raw response of hatred and revenge. It must keep its sights fixed on the oneness of all mankind and must aim at the welfare of the entire humanity.

The martyrdom of the Guru signifies an important stage in the evolution of human sensibility which distances political authority from freedom of faith. Religion must improve the intrinsic quality of individual and social life. The acts of an individual must not be identified with the faith that he professes. However, objective efforts must be made at identifying such elements in a system, exclusive focussing on which, can lead to the distortion of individual or collective perception. Every system has demarcations and divisions. A negative focussing of attention on such distinct attributes and attitudes on the part of the adherents or opponents of the system can lead to the temptation to stamp out divergence and dissent and the creation of perceptual monoliths. The broader the view point, the lesser is the desire to stamp out dissent, and greater the capacity to concede the possibility of validity of other schools of thought.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, with his hand on the pulse of the people—both Hindus and Muslims, knew the unreality of the divisive demarcations. The Emperor with all his power and consequent isolation sought security in creating the illusion of theological monoliths of perception. He was bound to fail in his mission because life is not a uni-dimensional, unilinear affair. Perception of mutually exclusive monoliths, perpetually at war with one another, only breeds intolerance which destroys

consensus and cohesion, whereas compassion promotes understanding of the undercurrent of oneness running through diversities and apparently opposed entities. Guru Tegh Bahadur triumphed because he embodied the life sustaining spiritual forces which transcend ego and imbue mankind with a rational balanced outlook.

He unfolded for us the eternal vision of human freedom and social harmony. The individual and the collective ego must be sublimated through a humble submission to the Divine because through humility alone can we get rid of fear of being dominated and the desire for domination. The humble must triumph over the arrogant without losing their humility. If we endeavour to over power arrogance with arrogance, arrogance alone will overcome the minds of men.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom is an event of great significance in the evolution of the Indian ethos. In his supreme sacrifice can be perceived the triumph of the eternal glory of the Indian spiritual tradition.

SAVIOUR OF THE SECULAR SENSIBILITY

KOI BOLE RAM RAM KOI KHUDAI

One calls Him Ram, another Khuda.
 Some call him Gossain, some Allah.
 He is all-powerful, bountiful, beneficent and merciful.
 Some go to Hindu bathing places; some to Mecca.
 Some perform the Hindu ritual of worship.
 Others bow down in namaz.
 Some read the Vedas, others the Koran.
 Some wear blue, others white
 Some are called Turks, others Hindu.
 Some covet Bihist some Swarga.
 Says Nanak; he who has understood God's commandment
 Alone knows His ways.

Guru Arjan. A.G.P. 885.

AWWAL ALLAH NOOR UPAYA

KUDRAT KE SAB BANDE

In the beginning Allah created the Light.
 His might has created all.
 The entire universe is created from that one Light.
 Who then is pure and who impure?
 Brother fall not in the delusion made by man;
 The Creator is in the creation; in creation is He.
 He pervades the universe.
 From one clay in various forms
 Has He made all creation.
 Neither is any pot of clay faulty, nor the potter.

Kabir. A.G. P. 1349

On November 11, 1675 Guru Tegh Bahadur attained martyrdom at Chandni Chowk, Delhi. He laid down his life in defence of the right of the Hindus to have the freedom to follow the faith of their forefathers. He had no faith in the obsolete ritualism of the Brahmins but he had the firm conviction that the state had no right to coerce people into changing their religion. When the persecuted Pandits from Kashmir came to Anandpur to seek his protection, he readily agreed to stand by them. He knew the consequences of his defiance of the authority of Emperor Aurangzeb who wished to convert Hindus en-masse. With that purpose in view, he had made a concerted attack on the Brahmins. He knew that in case he was able to convert the Brahmins to Islam, it would become very easy for him to turn India into the land of the faithful followers of Islam.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was not only the saviour of the Hindus. He also fought against fanaticism. He championed the cause of religious freedom in that age of religious intolerance. He was convinced that the might of the state should not be used for promoting the sectarian interests of any particular religion. He stood for the preservation and perpetuation of the Indian secular ethos. He believed that even the most powerful Emperor did not have the right to spiritually subjugate his people. He ensured that even under a despotic, theocratic dispensation, the people had the right to preserve their spiritual perceptions and safeguard their cultural entity. Guru Tegh Bahadur was the greatest liberator of mankind. His supreme sacrifice aimed at demolishing the medieval obscurantist life-denying forces. It signified the triumph of the values of equality, liberty and brotherhood. These values lie at the core of the modern political set up. He lived and died for the ascendancy of liberal principles of political organisation.

India is a sovereign, socialist, secular democratic republic. It's constitution grants the right to religious freedom to all its citizens. Under article 25 every Indian is entitled to freedom of conscience and has the right to profess, practise and propagate any religion. The state does not have the right to interfere with the religious affairs of the citizens. Articles 25-28 of the Indian constitution emphasise the secular character of our constitution. The state in India cannot either establish a religion of its own or confer any special patronage upon any particular religion. No citizen can be compelled to pay any taxes for the establishment or promotion of any particular religion. Religious instruction cannot be imparted in the institutions supported by the Government. No student can be compelled to receive religious instruction of any particular religion. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was a powerful assertion of the Indian people's right to protest against unjust authority. Guru Tegh Bahadur's willingness to lay down his life symbolised the consolidation of people's resolve to protect their spiritual entity.

The modern Indian state has been prohibited from making any discrimination on the ground of religion in all matters, in particular, in the matter of employment or access to the use of public places, or admission into any educational institution maintained or aided by the state or the right to vote.

Secularism is a modern concept. In the seventeenth century, the concept of the rights of the citizens had not yet acquired the requisite legitimacy. The state under Aurangzeb was a theocracy and under a theocratic system with a particular religion as the state religion, the adherents to other faiths must be discriminated as such discrimination is inherent in a theocratic political set up and falls within the theological scheme sanctifying such a system. Under our constitution the state cannot be hostile to any religion. Impartiality towards all creeds is implied. The makers of the Indian constitution do not speak in terms of a nation based exclusively on religious identity. Religious groups alone do not constitute a nation and the state must not belong to any particular religion and promote its interests.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur is the most convincing argument in favour of secularism. Secularism, is a movement away from religious intolerance and irrational dogmatism. It aims to accommodate understanding and rationality. It is an evolutionary modern process. Guru Tegh Bahadur was much ahead of his times. He was a mystic and not a political theorist. But his faith in the oneness of mankind and the sovereignty of human soul had made him perceive the essential oneness of mankind and the equality of all citizens in the eyes of God. The mystic concept of human equality was thus the basis of his perception of natural justice which denies to the state the right to discriminate. His mystic perception was in keeping with the precepts of the Indian spiritual tradition.

The western concept of secularism separates the state from the church. The Indian concept of secularism which means that the state should observe neutrality, so far as different religious systems are concerned, does not set the state against religion. All the same, it is rooted in the spiritual tradition which concedes validity to different religious systems. But it does not permit the state to be subordinated to any sectarian, exclusive religious principles and practices crystalised into any particular religious system but puts the state under the constraints of universalistic moral values.

Guru Tegh Bahadur made the supreme sacrifice because he believed that the universalist moral values were supreme and must not be subordinated to the whims or will of an Emperor. His perception of state citizen relations in the context of religious freedom of all citizens, is the very foundation of our constitutional commitment to the ideal of secularism.

Guru Tegh Bahadur did not act as a saviour of Hindus and Hinduism only. He stood for secularism as well. Viewed from this stand point, he should be considered to be the architect of modern India because secularism is the very quintessence of the ideology of independent India. His struggle for protection of the Hindus was not motivated by his pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim preferences or prejudices. It was motivated by his

genuine secularism. He responded to the pathetic predicament in which the Brahmins found themselves and this response was not polluted by sectarian considerations.

When we keep in mind the seventeenth century milieu, the supreme sacrifice made by the Guru acquires a revolutionary significance. In accordance with the Sikh spiritual ethos, the Guru upheld the ideal of a secular state which respects the beliefs of its people and keeps politics away from bigotry and fanaticism. The concept of secularism, as it is enshrined in our constitution, owes a debt of gratitude to the great Guru.

His martyrdom raises another very relevant question as to what should be the relation between religion and politics. The popular Sikh perception considers that the two are inextricably intertwined. But for conceding validity to this or the contrary view point we must be clear as to what we exactly mean by religion. Do we equate religion to a set of exclusive dogmas, customs and beliefs with cultural connotations which distinguish the adherents of one religious system from those owing allegiance to another such system, or we perceive it as an approach to life with its diverse multi-dimensional aspects which may admit of not one but many alternative perceptions with various degrees of relative validity. If we recognise the limits of human understanding, no perception can be absolutely valid and no judgement can be absolutely infallible. This applies to our religious perception of a political situation. We have also to keep in mind the fact that politics is manipulation of human situation for attaining and retaining power. It is a manipulation of power equations, human emotions and even animal instincts. Whereas politics is the symbol of power, religion symbolises or should symbolise piety and higher inclusive and universalistic value systems. It is a fact that people owing allegiance to a certain faith are drawn to each other because of the commonality of their beliefs and develop socio-spiritual and even political affinities. Religion, thus acts, as a social bond and creates common aspirations and religious groups can thus acquire distinct political and militaristic attributes. A religious

group when politically motivated may acquire power and use it for oppressing or eliminating or assimilating other religious groups or communities. Religious sentiment thus becomes an instrument of group or individual domination. Domination leads to debasement of the life of both the victor and the vanquished. This leads to the ossification of the religious impulse. The vastness of the vision gives way to a narrow-minded self destroying view-point which weakens the moral fibre of those who dominate and those who are dominated.

But this situation has its own dialectic. In their search for freedom from oppression, the victims of oppression try to resurrect themselves by discovering the validity of the universalistic, vital value system and the moral resurgence gives them the strength to fight for survival and sovereignty. The rebels use the religious sentiment in their righteous struggle whereas the oppressors use it for perpetuating domination over dominions and subjugated people. Seen in this context the sikh movement uses the power of piety for curbing the excesses of the toxic elements of intolerance and aggrandisement in the body politic.

The life story of Guru Tegh Bahadur unfolds this pattern. His opposition to the power of Emperor Aurangzeb emanates from the piety of his perception, his preference for justice, his opposition to aggrandisement and power intoxication. His opposition to injustice has no negative connotations because this opposition emanates from a state of egolessness. This opposition has no sectarian slant. It is a fight against fanaticism by a person who believes in the validity of other systems of belief and perception. It is the outcome of secular sensibility which under no circumstances will allow the replacement of one type of fanaticism with another. Considerations of piety rooted in a transcendental sensibility and not the considerations of power provide the motivation for this struggle.

BIRTH OF THE SAVIOUR

Pragt bhayye Guru Teg Bahadur

Pragt bhayye Guru Teg Bahadur.
 Sagal Srisht pe dhaapi chadar.
 Karam dharam ki jin pat rakhi.
 Attal kari kaljug me saakhi.
 Jis te sarb dharam bachio,
 Tin lok me jai jai bhayyi
 Satguru pej rakhi im layyi.
 Tilak janeo ghar dharamsala.
 Atal kari Guru Bhayye dayala.

Kavi Senapat

Guru Tegh Bahadur appeared on the earth.
 The entire universe received his protection.
 He came to the rescue of men of piety.
 He became eternal through his acts of valour.
 The Lord protected Dharma.
 The three realms resounded with his praise.
 Thus did the Lord protect the poor and the powerless.
 He saved the temple, the sacred thread and the sacred frontal
 marks of the Hindus.

Tegh Bahadur, the fifth and the youngest son of Guru Hargobind, was born at Amritsar on Baisakhi Vadi 5, 1678 BK. which corresponds to 1st April 1621. Guru Hargobind had donned the sword of Miri alongwith the sword of Piri with a view to subordinate politics to religion. The idea was to give an ethical orientation to politics so that the affairs of the state can be carried in accordance with the highest moral values and the purpose of political organisation is not reduced to mere exercise in acquisition, enhancement and exercise of power. Earlier his father Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs had laid down his life to uphold the moral values enshrined in the concept of citizen's right to self dignity. Guru Arjan's martyrdom was an assertion of the people's right to protest against oppression and injustice. Guru Hargobind carried the idea further by taking recourse to armed struggle. The battles he fought against the minions of Mughal empire sanctified a subjugated people's right to revolt against unjust socio-political authority. Guru Tegh Bahadur was destined to reaffirm this right by laying down his life at Chandni Chowk in Delhi on 11 November, 1675.

The Sikh tradition tells us about Guru Hargobind's prophecy regarding the significance of the role which the blessed babe was to play as Saviour of Dharma. The author of *Guru Bilas*, Patshahi Chhevin says that the Guru bowed to the new born baby. Bidhi Chand*, who was one of his prominent disciples, asked him as to what was the reason for this unusual gesture

There has been a controversy regarding the exact date of birth of Guru Tegh Bahadur but now most of the writers on the Guru agree that he was born on 1st April 1621 AD. The Guru's birthday has been traditionally celebrated on this date. Baba Gurditta, his eldest brother was born in 1613, Suraj Mal in 1617, Anil Rai was born in 1618 and Atal Rai in 1619. Guru Tegh Bahadur's only sister Bibi Viro was born in 1615. (Hari Ram Gupta. Guru Tegh Bahadur, a Biographical Study. Guru Tegh Bahadur, Background and Supreme Sacrifice. P.3)

of reverence from a father to a new born child.² The Guru told him that he had bowed to the child as he had perceived in him the manifestation of spiritual serenity and sublimity of the earlier Sikh Gurus.-

“Of all my sons he shall take office of the Guru. He shall protect the weak and relieve the poor of their distress. This shall be his principal mark.”³

Turning to the child the Guru had said:

“May Akal Purkh (God Almighty) and the eternal spirit of Guru Nanak bestow on thee all blessings. May thy sword like spirit fight for truth and Dharma unto the last.”⁴

The Guru further said that embarking on the boat of Dharma, he shall save the country from peril and strike at the root of tyranny and oppression.⁵ Baba Budha described him as a child of destiny and said that his sacrifices would shake the evil doers and destroy the foundation of oppression. Baba Buddha prayed:

“May you be brave and heroic enough to be the bearer of the cross of humanity and live and die like a saviour.”⁶

This legend regarding the birth of Guru Tegh Bahadur epitomises the expectations and aspirations of the Sikh movement. By sacrificing his life for the sake of Dharma and

* Bhai Bidhi Chand was a prominent disciple of Guru Hargobind. He had been a faithful devotee of the Fifth Guru. He was the son of Bhai Wasan and was born in the village Sur Singh. A man of strong physique, powerful will and refractory ways, he was retrieved by Guru Arjan and completely transformed. He was in the front rank of men who formed the army of Guru Hargobind and remained loyal to him unto his very last. There are many stories regarding his exploits in the Sikh lore.

(2) Guru Bilas Patshahi Chhevin., Chapter 9 page 1038

(3) Op cit. 2

(4) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P. 5

(5) Op. cit. 4.p. 5

(6) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr P. 5

for the protection of the weak and the defenceless people of India, he rose to the expectations of his illustrious father and his devoted disciples and earned the eternal gratitude of the Indian people who were to refer to him as the Saviour and protector of India.

The birth of Tegh Bahadur was an occasion for joyous celebrations for the devotees and disciples of Guru Hargobind. It was a cause of great joy for mother Nanaki, who all her life, remained exceedingly attached to him and accompanied him through his missionary travels. She had been with the Guru at Bakala throughout his stay there during 1644-1664. She naturally felt very happy when Guru Hargobind and his disciples told her that the child was the very incarnation of the spirit of Guru Nanak.

The child was named Tegh Bahadur, the brave wielder of the sword. He was also called Tyag Mal. He was a thoughtful child of retiring nature and loved seclusion. He was an unusually quiet child with reflective proclivities. It is believed that his original name was Tyag Mal. Even in the official records there is a reference to him as Tyag Mal.⁷ The name Tegh Bahadur was given to him owing to the display of extraordinary military prowess in Guru Hargobind's last battle with the Mughal chiefs. In the Sikh tradition he is almost always referred to as Tegh Bahadur. Bhai Nand Lal Goya, Bhai Mani Singh, and the author of Guru Pratap Surya Granth call him Tegh Bahadur. Above all Guru Gobind Singh refers to him as Guru Tegh Bahadur. Dr. Trilochan Singh says that Tyag Mal was the attributive name of the Guru.

* Baba Buddha is a legendary figure of Sikh History. He became a disciple of Guru Nanak at the age of ten. He was a man of deep wisdom and understanding. The first Guru had great affection for him and respected him for his wisdom. Baba Buddha performed the ceremonies connected with the annointment of the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth Guru. He was held in great esteem by them. He was the first Granthi of Adi Granth.

(7) Dr. Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur, Prophet and Martyr*. P. 13-14

In the Sikh ethos the spirit of renunciation and the wielding of sword are not contradictory and contrary phenomena. The man of God is not a recluse. The saint is also a warrior and faith connotes highest universalistic values and not sectarian or temporal aspirations. In the Sikh system renunciation stands for detachment and this detachment prepares the warrior for waging the holy war (Dharam Yudh) and this war is not to be fought for personal or sectarian domination but for the welfare of entire mankind. The wielder of the sword and the man of detachment thus merge into a single entity which sustains the martial and mystic manifestations of the enlightened soul. In this way Tegh Bahadur and Tyag Mal became attributive names for the ninth Guru who was both a yogi and a prince, warrior and a martyr. Ajit Singh Bagha thinks that Guru Tegh Bahadur's name has a significance in terms of the nature of the Sikh - Mughal confrontation as it signifies the militant aspect of this confrontation.⁸ He has quoted James Brown (History of Origin and Progress of Sikhs, 1787) to say that Aurangzeb objected to Guru's assuming the title 'Tegh Bahadur' though he had fought no wars. The author of 'Sikhan Di Bhagat Mal' has also written to this effect. He, however, says that the Guru told the Emperor that the wielder of the sword had been born who would protect the cow and the Brahmin and snatch power from the functionaries of the Emperor. In the context of the Sikh tradition, it is not necessary to think in terms of dichotomy between the spirit implied in the epithets Tyag Mal and Tegh Bahadur. His observation that 'on rare occasions names of persons cost them their lives and Guru Tegh Bahadur's name earned him death sentence', is hardly tenable. Aurangzeb might have objected to the epithet "Tegh Bahadur" but his opposition to the Guru emanated from his perception of the Guru as the main hurdle in the achievement of his theological ambitions.

(8) Ajit Singh Bagha, *Pal Prsanavli*. P. 33-57

EARLY INFLUENCES

Tegh Bahadur grew up in a highly literary, religious and philosophical atmosphere which helped him in the formation of his basic attitudes to life. He was brought up with great love and care. His mother Nanaki was a virtuous lady. She was a paragon of beauty and a treasure house of spiritual values. She had a powerful impact on the formation of Guru Tegh Bahadur's personality. She was a sober, sweet tongued and foresighted woman and cheerfully submitted to the will of her husband, Guru Har Gobind.⁹

Even as a child the Guru was extremely kind and compassionate. Once when he saw a child shivering in cold he gave his clothes and ornaments to the child.¹⁰ He displayed a sound sense of integrity and always tried to harmonise words with actions. A story about his childhood tells us that he did not advise a child to give up eating jaggery before he himself had succeeded in overcoming his own desire for it.¹¹

Tegh Bahadur's schooling started when he was four and a half years old. Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas were his teachers. As he grew up he was taught Sikh philosophy, metaphysics, Sikh scriptures, the Bhagwat Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata and the fundamentals of Islamic philosophy. He was taught language and history. He was also taught Quranic lore and Sufi texts.¹²

He took special interest in music and poetry. This training was imparted to him by Bhai Babak the minstrel of Guru

(9) Satbir Singh. Bado Kallu Mahe Saka. (Panjabi) P6-7

(10) Op. cit 9. P.8

(11) Op. cit 9.P. 8

(12) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P. 19

+ Babak, a Muslim musician, was the rebeck player of Guru Hargobind. He had also been given military training and took part in the battles fought by the Guru. When Guru's mansion at Amritsar was surrounded by Mughal forces, he alongwith Bhai Singha rescued Bibi Viro the daughter of the Guru.

Hargobind. Bhai Joti Mal trained him in martial arts.¹³ He had a special fondness for Rag Jaijaiwanti. This Raga had not been so far used in the Adi Granth. The pathos and meditative tenderness of this Raga fascinated Tegh Bahadur and he later on composed hymns in this Raga.¹⁴

Tegh Bahadur was endowed with a fine sensitivity. He had the loftiness of the mind of his father. During his childhood he imbibed the virtues of humility. He learnt to submit to the Divine Will. He was reserved and thoughtful. His capacity for reflection and meditation helped him in acquiring extraordinary spiritual strength. From his father he had acquired the virtue of fearlessness and the will to stand against injustice and oppression.¹⁵ It was this combination of humility and heroism which helped him in putting up unique and non-violent opposition to Emperor Aurangzeb's anti-Hindu policies.

When he was only seven years old he witnessed the death of his elder brother Attal Rai, who it is said, used his supernatural powers to bring back to life one of his playmates. When he was reprimanded by Hargobind, Atal Rai gave his own life to atone for the sin of having performed miracles. His eldest brother Gurditta also died in similar circumstances. He too, it is said, had revived a cow and was also reluctant to give up the daughter of one of the disciples Nakhora, who was eager to marry his daughter to Gurditta.¹⁶ The death of his dear brothers convinced him of the undesirability of using miracles. He could have saved his life by showing miracles but he preferred to accept martyrdom to using supernatural powers with a view to interfere with the Divine dispensation¹⁷.

(13) Surrinder Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P. 64

(14) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P. 20-21

(15) Op. cit. 13 P. 37-39. Also Op cit 14. P 17-20

(16) Surrinder Singh Johar. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P. 59-60

(17) B.S. Gupta. Guru Tegh Bahadur. A study. P. 27

THE PRINCE, THE POET AND THE YOGI

Idealism is inherent in the Sikh tradition of heroism. The Gurus aimed at creating a sensibility which combined involvement with detachment. Guru Tegh Bahadur was given to thinking and reflection on the Divine. He loved seclusion. His pensive disposition and apparent lack of interest in the affairs of life and the activities of childhood had earned him the attributive name Tyag Mal. But he was not a recluse. He was a yogi and a prince at the same time. He had taken part in the battle of Kiratpur¹⁸ and was praised by one and all for his bravery and skill in martial arts. It is said that it was after this battle that he had been given the name Tegh Bahadur.¹⁹

He had not renounced the world. He married Gujar, the daughter of Lal Chand, a pious and prosperous Khatri of Kiratpur. The marriage was solemnised in 1632. Following the footsteps of his father, he also took part in the hunting expeditions.²⁰

Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetic compositions are full of pathos and a compassionate concern for the human predicament. During the period of his childhood he witnessed death claiming the lives of so many near and dear ones. His brother Atal Rai breathed his last in 1628 at the age of nine. At that time Tegh Bahadur was only seven years old. This death shocked him and also taught him an unforgettable lesson.²¹ It was the first death in the family. After the death of his dear brother the Guru avoided worldly pleasures and devoted himself to prayer and meditation.²² His other brother Ani Rai fell sick and passed

(18) Hari Ram Gupta. A Biographical study. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Background and Supreme Sacrifice. P.4

(19) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P. 80

(20) Ajit Singh Bagha. Palprsanavli. P.109

(21) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur Prophet and Martyr. P. 49

(22) Hari Ram Gupta. Guru Tegh Bahadur. A Biographical study. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Background and Supreme Sacrifice. P.3

away, Kaulan the noble lady who had been entrusted to the protection of Guru Hargobind by the famous Sufi Saint Mian Mir breathed her last in 1628.²³ Mian Mir himself left for his heavenly abode in 1635.²⁴

Gurditta, his eldest brother died in 1638. The same year he witnessed the death of Bhai Bidhi Chand. His music teacher Babak also breathed his last in the same year. Bhai Joti Mal who had also taught Tegh Bahadur the use of arms passed away.²⁵ Bhai Buddha and Bhai Gurdas had left this world in 1631. In the same year the venerable Baba Shri Chand, son of Guru Nanak and the founder of the Udasi sect, breathed his last. Guru Hargobind himself gave up the mortal coil in 1644.

All these events left a deep imprint on Guru Tegh Bahadur's psyche and poetic sensibility. He imbibed the virtue of unquestioning submission to the will of God. He also imbibed the spirit of detachment. When Guru Hargobind nominated Guru Har Rai, son of Guru Tegh Bahadur's eldest brother Gurditta, mother Nanaki was a little upset but Guru Tegh Bahadur did not entertain any such feelings. He cheerfully accepted his father's decision and was the first to pay his obeisance to Guru Har Rai. He was followed by Baba Suraj Mal.²⁶

(23) Op cit 21. P.68

(24) Kaulan was the daughter of Qazi Rustam Khan. She was a disciple of the famous Sufi Saint, Mian Mir. As Kaulan's father insisted that she should marry, she sought refuge with Mian Mir who entrusted her to the protection of Guru Hargobind. She was a devotee of the Guru.

Muin-ul-Islam, Mian Mir was born in Sistan, Persia. He was the disciple of Khawaja Khizer. In his youth he came to Lahore and became a disciple of Maulana Niamat Allah of the Qadiriya Silsila of Sufis. Akbar, Jahangir and Nur Jahan were among his ardent admirers. He was a great friend of Guru Arjan and laid the foundation stone of Harimandir. It was owing to his influence that Jahangir desisted from confiscating the property belonging to Guru Arjan.

(25) Surrinder Singh Johar, Guru Tegh Bahadur P.60

(26) Op. cit. 25. P.63

THE MYSTIC WARRIOR

When Tegh Bahadur was born Jahangir ruled over India. He had ascended the throne in 1605 (3rd November). Shah Jahan became the Emperor after the death of Jahangir in 1627. In 1658 Aurangzeb ascended the throne after a bitter and bloody war of succession. During Guru Tegh Bahadur's life span, power changed hands thrice. Jahangir was responsible for the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. The blessings bestowed by Guru Arjan on prince Khusrau, Jahangir's rival in the war for succession, had irritated him. During his last moments Guru Arjan sent specific instructions to Guru Hargobind to sit on the throne fully armed and to maintain an army to the best of his ability.²⁷

Guru Hargobind took recourse to arms to uphold the right of subjugated people to live in honour and dignity. He kept two swords. One signifying the spiritual sovereignty and the other temporal authority. The Guru had come to possess seven hundred horses, three hundred horsemen and sixty gunners. He fought as many as six battles. In the battle at Amritsar in which Mukhalis Khan was killed the Mughal army comprised of as many as seven thousand troops.²⁸

Guru Hargobind had donned the swords of Miri and Piri. He combined the attitude of a yogi with the life style of a prince. The Sikh Gurus were not ascetics. With Hargobind a new phase in the Sikh perception began. The concept of Dharama Yudh acquired legitimacy. Shivaji's Guru Goswami Ram Das met the sixth Guru in Kashmir and asked as to why did he live like a prince and not like a saint. The Guru replied,

‘Batan Fakiri
Zahir Amiri
Shastra gharib ki rakhia
Jarvane ki bhakhia ’

(27) Jagjit Singh. The Sikh Revolution .P. 164

(28) Hari Ram Gupta. History of the Sikhs P. 109, 117

Guru Hargobind's reply to Goswami Ramdas contains the quintessence of the Sikh spiritual and social ethos. Guru Nanak, the Sixth Guru said, had renounced Maya and not the world.²⁹

This was the philosophy of Tegh Bahadur, as well. He too dressed like a prince, took part in hunting, participated in battles, but was basically a saint who had no attachment with the world but was not indifferent to the happenings around him. He was a true yogi who led the life of a householder. He fought in self defence and when he deemed it fit, he laid down his life in defence of the helpless Hindus.

Despite the fact that Guru Arjan had been martyred by Jahangir and that Guru Hargobind had fought as many as six battles against the Mughal chiefs and had been earlier imprisoned by Jahangir, the atmosphere in the court of the Guru was not anti-Muslim. Hatred can never be a part of genuine spiritual perception. The Guru had among his friends a number of Muslims. Mian Mir the Sufi Saint was an admirer and a friend of the Guru. Bibi Kaulan, one of his disciples lived under the protection of the Guru and the Guru had complete faith in her noble character, unfailing intuition and her spiritual destiny.³⁰ Buddhan Shah of kiratpur was another Muslim who was a friend of Guru Hargobind. Painde Khan was one of the commanders of his army. Babak, a Muslim minstrel sang hymns at the holy assemblies. He had rescued Bibi Viro when the city of Amritsar had been besieged by the Royal forces. After winning a victory over the forces headed by Abdullah Khan Governor of Jullundur and Bhagwan Das Gharer's son Ratan Chand and Chandu Shah's son Karam Chand, the Guru had built a temple for the Hindus and a mosque for the Muslims

(29) Dr, Trilochan singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur Prophet and Martyr. P.36

"My spirit is that of a recluse though I look like a prince. The arms I have donned are for the protection of the poor and the destruction of the tyrants."

(30) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur, Prophet and Martyr. P. 35.

at Hargobindpur.³¹ In the battle against Lal Beg at Kiratpur, Rai Jodh a Muslim chieftain, had fought against Lal beg and on the side of Guru Hargobind alongwith two thousand of his soldiers.³² Sikh militancy, as it evolved under the leadership of Guru Hargobind, had nothing sectarian about it. Tegh Bahadur had during the formative years of his life, deeply imbibed the basic values on which such a militant perception was based.

Whereas the parting advice of Guru Arjan to Hargobind was to arm himself to the best of his ability (For self defence of course), Guru Hargobind advised Guru Har Rai to avoid armed conflict with the Mughals:-

“ Live in peace and as you are quite young, avoid clash with the Mughal armies as far as possible. The Hindu states around this place keep on quarrelling and fighting. Do not get involved in their internecine warfare. As the Mughals are not trustworthy, keep at least 2200 soldiers fully armed with you but be not the first to provoke fighting.”³³

Non-violence, detachment and submission to the will of God marked Tegh Bhadur's attitudes. He had acquired inviolable equipoise. His sensibility had transcended ego. Guru Hargobind nominated Har Rai, son of Gurditta, Guru Hargobind's eldest son as the seventh Guru in 1644. Guru Har Rai nominated his own son, Har Kishan as his successor in 1661. At that time Guru Tegh Bahadur was forty years of age. Guru Har Rai and Guru Harkishan were both junior to him by eight and thirty five years respectively. He was the uncle of Guru Har Rai and grand uncle of Guru Har Kishan, but he did not assert his superior claims. After the annointment of Guru Har Rai he quietly retired to Bakala alongwith his mother and devoted himself entirely to meditation on God.³⁴

(31) Surriender Singh Johar. Guru Tegh Bhadur. P.56

(32) Op. cit. 30. P.68,75,76

(33) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P. 86,87

(34) Ajit Singhh Bagha. Pal Prsanavali. P.114

EVOLUTION OF A VISION

At the time of departure for Bakala Tegh Bahadur was only twenty three years of age. At Bakala he stayed in the house of Bhai Mehra who was a devoted disciple of Guru Hargobind. In those days Bakala was a flourishing business centre. Tegh Bahadur got an underground cell built and used to spend most of his time meditating in the seclusion of that cell. He spent about twenty years at Bakala.⁽³⁵⁾ Dr. Trilochan Singh is of the view that the Guru stayed at Bakala from 1645-1665 AD. Fauja Singh, however, is of the view that he Guru left for various pilgrimage centers in the East in 1656 and stayed at Bakala.³⁵ He went to Kiratpur from where he proceeded to Kurukshetra via Ropar. From kurukshetra he went to Haridwar and stayed there for a few months. Passing through Garh Mukteshwar, he reached Prayag in 1661. Banaras was the next centre of pilgrimage visited by him. From Banaras he went to Sasram and Gaya and at last reached Patna.³⁶ It was here, Kesar Singh Chhiber the author of Bansavli Nama, tells us that Guru Gobind Singh was born. But Fauja Singh does not agree. He says that this view is not final.³⁷ When The Guru learnt that Guru Har Rai had passed away he left for Punjab. On his return journey he reached Banaras on third January 1663.³⁸ He reached Delhi on 21 March 1664 to condole with Guru Harikrishan, the death of Guru Har Rai.

During his stay at Bakala, he mainly devoted himself to meditation. But his meditation was not like that of an ascetic. He lived like a householder and went out for hunting.³⁹ Neither did he mortify his body nor did he renounce the world. He

(35) Dr. Trilochan Singh Guru Tegh Bahadur, Prophet and Martyr. p.92-93

(36) Fauja Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.19, 119.

(37) Balwant Singh Anand. Guru Tegh Bahadur. A Biography. P.108

(38) Op. cit. 36. P.20

(39) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P.90-93

did not believe in escaping from the problems of earthly existence. Some times he looked sad but he never lost hope and faith in God.⁴⁰ He did not discard life. His solitude did not isolate him from his fellow human beings. The communion with the Divine Spirit made him still more compassionate towards the suffering humanity.⁴¹ His stay at Bakala was a period of preparation for the supreme sacrifice.⁴² It was during this period that he acquired the knowledge of reality and tried to understand the problems facing the people with a view to find a remedy to these problems.⁴³

Guru Har Kishan passed away on March 30, 1664. Before breathing his last he had muttered, 'Baba Bakale' indicating thereby that the next Guru was to be found at Bakala. Mata Bassi, grandmother of Guru Harkishan, Mata Sulakhni alongwith many prominent Sikhs left for Kiratpur from where they found that there were as many as twenty two claimants. Guru Tegh Bahadur was reluctant to assert his claim. Guru Tegh Bahadur was discovered by Makhan Shah Lubana, a wealthy trader from Mote Tanda in Kashmir. He had come to Bakala on 9th October 1664⁴⁴ to redeem his vow by offering 500 gold mohurs to the Guru for salvaging his ships as these were on the verge of being destroyed by the storm in the ocean. When he made an offering of five mohurs the Guru reminded him that he had offered to pay five hundred. Makhan Shah Lubana shouted from the house top that he had discovered the Guru.⁴⁵

Guru Tegh Bahadur's annointment settled the issue of succession but Dhir Mal, son of Guru Har Rai, could not reconcile himself. His followers led by Shihan (A Masand) attacked the Guru. He fired at the Guru and a bullet grazed his arm. The attackers were beaten back by the disciples of the

(40) Surrinder Singh Johar. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. P.75

(41) *Op cit.* 39. P. 94

(42) *Op cit.* 40. P. 76

(43) Pritam Singh Gill. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. Unique Martyr. P.38

(44) Harbans Singh. *Gru Tegh Bahadur*. P.51

(45) Dr. Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. (Pb). P.51-53

Guru.⁴⁶ The Guru exhorted his disciples to forgive the supporters of Dhir Mal and return to Dhir Mal the goods which they had brought from his house. He asked them that they should not retain anything which actually did not belong to the Guru.⁴⁷

AT AMRITSAR

Shortly afterwards the Guru left for Amritsar. He was accompanied by the members of his family. He reached Amritsar on 22nd November, 1664. Harji Mina and his followers did not allow the Guru to enter Harimandir. The women of Amritsar, however, raised their voice against this outrage. They accorded a warm welcome to the Guru. The Guru left for Kiratpur via Goindwal. While crossing the river Beas, he came to know that the holy Granth belonging to Dhir Mal had been retained by his followers. The Guru immediately ordered that the holy Granth should be at once returned to Dhir Mal.⁴⁸ Being a man of high principles, the Guru believed that wrong means can never be justified.

ANAND PUR THE ABODE OF BLISS

On thirteenth May 1665, he left for Bilaspur to condole the death of Raja Dip Chand. The Rani offered to gift three villages (Lodhipur, Mian Pur, Sehota) to the Guru. Guru Tegh Bahadur declined to receive the gift. He paid Rs. five hundred for the villages⁴⁹ and laid the foundation of the city of Anandpur on 19 June, 1665. It is said, while the construction work in the new city was going on, a Muslim Fakir passed that way. He objected to Guru's involvement in worldly affairs. The Guru told him that there is nothing wrong with participation in worldly affairs. But one should remain detached. He

(46) Op cit. 45. P.55

(47) Op cit. 45.P.55

(48) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Pb. P.58

(49) Teja Singh, Ganda Singh. History of the Sikhs. P. 58

told the Fakir that 'Grahista* is the highest good in life... this is the sustainer of human race. What matters is the purity of thoughts and deeds⁵⁰. "Raja Deep Chand exempted the Guru from paying taxes.⁵¹

MISSIONARY CAMPAIGNS

In Bachitra Natak, Guru Gobind Singh speaks of the journey undertaken by Guru Tegh Bahadur towards the East to visit different centres of pilgrimage. The journey was undertaken primarily with a view to revive old contacts and to link Sikhs with the new centres of Sikhism at Kiratpur and Anandpur.⁵² The Guru did not embark upon this journey to escape bickerings. The theory that he went to the East because his earlier visit had been interrupted by the death of Guru Har Rai, is also untenable. The idea that the Guru had gone to Damdhan (Rohtak, Haryana) to bring back his belongings is also untenable. He had left his belongings there on his return journey from his earlier visit. Fauja Singh is of the view that the Guru did not embark upon this journey because Punjab was unsafe for him. He was arrested on complaints from orthodox Ulema and Hindus but was later on released by Aurangzeb when Raja Ram Singh interceded on his behalf.⁵³ and secured his release on 17th December 1665 AD.⁵⁴

The Guru had a definite mission. The purpose of his visit was to create an awakening among the people and help them to stand against tyranny and injustice.⁵⁵

After passing through Mathura and Agra the Guru went to Allahbad. From there he went to Mirzapur and Banaras. He

(50) Harbans Singh- Guru Tegh Bahadur. P. 51

(51) Pritam Singh Gill. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Unique Martyr. P. 45
* Life of a house holder.

(52) Balwant Singh Anand. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P. 141

(53) Fauja Singh, Guru Tegh Bahadur P.42

(54) Harbans Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur P.67

(55) Pritam Singh Gill, Guru Tegh Bahadur P.46

reached Patna in May 1666 after passing through Sasram and Gaya. But soon he left for Dacca from where he went to Salhet, Chittagong and Sondip by the end of 1667 AD. It was at Dacca that he received the news of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh. He accompanied Raja Ram Singh to Assam and was helpful in making the two parties reach an agreement.

The Guru came back to Dacca after leaving Assam in 1670 AD. From there he went to Puri in Nov. 1670. On coming to know of Aurangzeb's reign of terror he rushed back to Patna and leaving his family there,⁵⁶ he reached Delhi on 16 June 1670. He stayed at Delhi in the Dharmsal of Bhai Kalyana and then left for Lakhnaur, where Guru Gobind Singh, along with his mother, had already arrived. The family left for Anandpur but the Guru went to village Malla to pay a visit to his sister. From there he went to Kirat Pur and Bakala and finally reached Anandpur in 1671 on the eve of Baisakhi.⁵⁷

The Guru stayed at Anandpur for about two years and then embarked upon another journey through South Eastern Punjab and Banger Desh. He went to Saifabad to meet his Muslim devotee.⁵⁸ During this tour he visited about ninety villages in the backward regions of Punjab in the Tehsils of Patiala, Rajpura, Sirhind, Sanam, Mansa, Dhuri, Sangrur and Barnala.⁵⁹ The Guru helped the villagers in digging wells,⁶⁰ acquiring cows and tried to wean people away from the cultic influence of Sakhi Sarvar (A Muslim saint who had a large number of Hindus as his followers)⁶¹ and free their minds of fear of ghosts and demons⁶².

(56) Pritam Singh Singh Gill. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. Unique Martyr.* P.45-48

(57) Harbans Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur.* P.80

(58) Attar Singh. *Travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur.* Indian Public Opinion Lahore 1876. Sakhi No I

(59) Dr. Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr.* P. 277-78

(60) Attar Singh. *Travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur.* Sakhi no.33

(61) Op. cit. 68 Sakhi No.7

(62) Op cit. 61 Sakhi. No 14

The Guru completely identified himself with people who flocked to him in large numbers. Through his sermons he created in them a consciousness of spiritual freedom which can be obtained by reposing faith in God whose authority is supreme. This alone could give them comfort and economic freedom. Moral freedom alone could spiritually resurrect the people and give them freedom from oppression because a morally awakened people alone have the courage to stand up to their oppressors.

This journey was an attempt to organise virtue and create among the people a consciousness of their strength. It transformed the area socially and politically. The popularity of the Guru and the efficacy of his message released the process of socio-spiritual transformation of the area. The government agents were panicky and sent alarming reports of the activities of the Guru to the Emperor. The visit of the persecuted Brahmins from Kashmir and Guru's willingness to come to their rescue resulted in the arrest and execution of the Guru.

MYSTICISM MEDITATION AND SOCIAL AWARENESS

The Sikh Gurus were visionaries. They looked at the world of human relations from the mystic's viewpoint in the sense that they believed in the oneness of entire mankind. Being householders they had first hand contact and understanding of the social reality. All of them showed lively interest in social reformation and transformation not through legislation but through an improvement in the socio-cultural, moral attitudes of the people. This combination of the social and the spiritual perception is the source of Sikh dynamism. The Sikh resurgence was a moral and spiritual resurgence which had a political fall out. But the Sikh tradition does not allow manipulation of the social reality with the help of spiritual power for political purposes specially in terms of sectarian politics of domination and subordination. It does not allow even an illusory manipulation of reality with the help of magic and miracles as is obvious from Guru Tegh Bahadur's refusal to perform miracles in order to prove his divinity*.

Politics is the art of acquiring, retaining and exercising power. As such it is a part of the social reality. The Sikh Gurus were conscious of the social and political dimensions of human existence. Their pursuit of spiritual perfection did not turn them into ascetics. But they never allowed the universalistic aspects of their spiritual and social perception to be conditioned by exclusive political motives. Of course, being concerned with human existence, they would like the quality of life, even the quality of political life to be improved through the inculcation of humane, altruistic value system. This is why, despite their opposition to the excesses of the socio-political system they never lost their balance and dignity. Temporal considerations

* When Ram Rai tried to gain Aurangzeb's goodwill by changing a word in a line from Gurbani he was disowned by his father Guru Har Rai, the Seventh Guru.

were never allowed to sully their spiritual, ethical view of life.

Generally we talk of mysticism in other worldly terms. The mystic to us is a man who has withdrawn from the social, political scene. Withdrawal is a fact of mystic experience but it is not the ultimate fact. The realisation of the divine presence in the material reality brings the mystic back to the world of physical reality. His love for God is transformed into his love for the Lord's creation. The endeavour to attain the state of egolessness which ends all duality, turns this love into compassion for the sufferings of God's creatures. This compassion for the suffering of humanity, whether this sufferings is caused by subordination to animal instincts (sex, anger, greed, pride and attachment) in person to person relations or the citizen-state relations, the mystic visionary's heart overflows with love and concern for those who suffer and he comes back to them to provide spiritual succour to them.

Guru Tegh Bahadur meditated on God and pondered over the ills that afflict mankind. The tradition tells us of his withdrawal in an underground cell. During the long period of meditation (According to some biographers he spent twenty years in meditation while according to others he spent twelve years in meditation) to attain freedom from fear by attaining a state of egolessness which manifests itself in detachment. One achieves Nirvana by transcending the Self (Ego). In terms of social relations, this state of egolessness becomes the source of objectivity, the desire to do justice and the desire to stand by those who are the helpless victims of injustice. Idealism is thus transformed into altruism and the quest for personal salvation becomes the quest for the salvation of mankind. The seeker ascends the heights of mystic experience but steps down to lessen the suffering of humanity.¹ The activities of such a mystic do have political potentialities but are not motivated by power politics. The Sikh Gurus had the conviction that the mystic who has purified himself through meditation must come

(1) Balwant Singh Anand. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P. 28

back to society. The Bhakta poets were mystics. It is in this context that the Bhakti movement acquires a radical dimension. The Monotheism of the Bhakta poets and their cult of love, even when they worshipped sectarian deities had a radical impact on the social structure of the Indian society.² Kabir's assertion of the equality of all men thus acquires a radical undertone and militates against caste based inequalities and religious animosities.³

The Sikh tradition combines social awareness with transcendental detachment. Even otherwise meditation in the case of the Guru was not a withdrawal from social responsibilities. The Guru stayed at Bakala with his family. Furthermore he did not become an ascetic. Meditation was not accompanied by practices which mortify the flesh. Even in the seclusion of the underground cell at Bakala the Guru was not oblivious of the happenings in the Sikh circles. He was also aware of the evolution of the policy of persecution of the Sikhs on the part of the Mughal authorities. As Trilochan Singh has said even at Bakala, the Guru did not live in state of isolation and oblivion.⁴ He prayed not only for his own salvation but for the salvation of the whole of mankind.⁵

Even during the early years of his life the Guru had seen the growing confrontation between the Sikhs and the Mughal State. Guru Arjan had been martyred by Jahangir in the year 1606 for predominantly religious reasons though it has been said that Jahangir's opposition to the Guru emanated from Guru Arjan's support of prince Khusrav. The Guru felt compassion for the prince and even gave him Rs. five thousand.⁶ The Guru was fined by Jahangir but he refused to pay the fine and was sentenced to death. Jahangir's assessment of the role played

(2) Jagjit Singh. *The Sikh Revolution*. P. 71

(3) *Awal Allah Noor Upaya*, Kudrat ke Sab Bande. AG 1349

(4) Dr. Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr*. P.94

(5) Op. cit 4. P.94

(6) A.Rashid. Jahangir. From *The Mughal Empire*, R.C. Majumdar. Ed. P. 179

by the Guru is rather different. In his autobiography he has clearly stated his reasons for ordering the execution of Guru Arjan.

‘ A Hindu named Arjan lived at Goindwal on the banks of river Beas in the garb of a saint. As a result many of the simple minded Hindus as well as ingnorant foolish Muslims have been persuaded to adopt his ways and manners and he had raised aloft the standard of sainthood and holiness. He was called Guru. From all sides cowboys and idiots became his fast followers. This business had flourished for three or four generations. For a long time it had been in my mind to put a stop to this vain affair (Dukan-e-Batal) or to bring him to the fold of Islam.’⁷

Jahangir’s orders for Guru Arjan’s execution were not entirely motivated by political compulsions. Jahangir was under the influence of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Head of the Naqashbandi order, who could not brook the conversion of some Muslims to Sikhism. Guru Arjan’s martyrdom delighted Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi and he wrote a letter of appreciation to Iftikhar Khan the Governor of Lahore saying that “the execution at this time, of the accursed Kaffir of Govindwal... is an act of higher grace for the followers of Islam.”⁸

Akbar died in 1605 (Oct.17) and Guru Arjan was executed in June 1606. Jahangir did not punish the Guru simply for having helped his son Khusrav. He wanted to check the spread of Sikhism.⁹ The Guru had also refused to change certain hymns in the Adi Granth. The Emperor had sentenced the Guru to death but on intervention from Mian Mir, this sentence was reduced to a fine of Rs. one Lakh and on Guru’s refusal to pay the fine the Emperor ordered his execution through torture.¹⁰

(7) Tuzk-e-Jahangiri.

(8) Jagjit Singh. The Sikh Revolution. P.157

(9) Op. cit. 8. P.161

(10) Op. cit 8. P. 162

The Sikh tradition tells us that the Guru told Mian Mir that he wanted to set an example by undergoing torture so that the Sikhs should learn to suffer for their convictions and that they should have the courage to profess their ideas openly. This defiance on the part of Guru Arjan was a landmark in the transformation of the Sikh psyche.

Guru Arjan's exhortation to Guru Hargobind to sit fully armed on the throne and to maintain an army to the best of his ability, meant the need for self-defence. It resulted in the institution of Miri and Piri and coming into existence of Akal Takht.¹¹

Mian Mir's influence on Jahangir.¹² resulted in decreasing the intensity of his anti-Sikh stand and softened his attitude towards the Sikhs. The Governor of Punjab did ask the Emperor to enforce Shariat strictly but on the whole the Emperor continued to follow the liberal policies of Akbar. He asked his officers not to enforce Islam on any one.¹³ Certain cases can, however, be cited to prove his orthodoxy. He sanctioned daily allowance to the new converts.

He took action against those Hindus who had married Muslim girls after these had been converted to Hinduism. Their Hindu husbands were punished.¹⁴ He did allow the construction of new temples although during the military campaigns temples were destroyed in conformity with the usual practice followed by the invading armies of the Muslim kings. He persecuted the Jains of Gujarat.¹⁵ Their temples, it was alleged, had become centres of disturbance and their religious leaders were accused of immoral practices. When he visited Ajmer in the eighth year of his rule he destroyed the temple of Bhagwat at Ajmer.¹⁶

(11) Op. cit. 8. P.161

(12) A Rashid. Jahangir. The Mughal Empire. Ed. R.C. Majumdar. P. 192

(13) Op. cit. 12. P. 193

(14) Op. cit. 12. P. 194

(15) Op. cit. 12. P. 194

(16) Op. cit. 12 P. 194 Also see Gurdev Singh. Socio-Political orientation of Sikh Gurus-86-89

Shahjahan had received liberal education but later on he became more orthodox and less tolerant. He tried to regiment the Muslim society and also made efforts to give Muslim colouring to the court by abolishing un-muslim practice of Sijda though he continued with Jharokha Darshan and Tula Dan. He did not reimpose Jizya but he revived the pilgrim tax for a while. He forbade the completion of certain temples and prevented the building of new ones. The policy was, however, reviewed later on. He forbade the conversion of Muslims to Hinduism when he came to know that four thousand Muslim women had been reconverted to Hinduism and married to Hindus. According to B.P. Saxena the practice of desecrating Hindu temples became systematic in his reign. He ordered the demolition of newly built temples in 1633 (January) specially at Banaras. Systematic efforts were made at the instance of the Emperor to convert Hindus by persuasion and force. Shah Mir Lahauri and Muhib Ali Sindhi were commissioned with this work. They presented new converts to the Emperor.¹⁷ The Sikh tradition speaks of the desecration and the demolition of the Baoli in Dabi Bazar Lahore which was filled up under the orders of Shah Jahan and a mosque was built on the attached site of the Langar.¹⁸ Bhai Guurdas also speaks of the Hindu sancturies being pulled down and mosques raised over their debris. The author of Mahan Kosh records that the sacred Baoli was demolished under orders of Shah Jahan in 1628.

The battles fought by Guru Har Gobind took place in the reign of Shah Jahan. According to Hari Ram Gupta these battles took place after the death of Mian Mir and Wazir Khan, the Governor of Punjab who was a man of liberal views.¹⁹

(17) Dr. B.P.Saxena. History of Shahjahan of Delhi. P. 293-95

(18) A.S.Bagha. Palprasanvali.. P. 109

(19) Hari Ram Gupta. Guru Tegh Bahadur a Biographical Study. (Guru Tegh Bahadur. Background and Supreme Sacrifice. Ed.G.S.Talib) P. 3-4

Guru Tegh Bahadur was thus conscious of the socio-political reality of the times in which he lived. The Gurus were involved in these events. They were not mere spectators but their involvement was actuated by considerations which were primarily ethical.

From 1644-1657 there was almost no confrontation between the Mughals and the Sikh Gurus. According to the Sikh tradition Guru Har Rai even helped Shahjahan to save the life of Dara by sending to Shahjahan a remedy for his recovery.²⁰ But during the war of succession before the final ascent to power by Aurangzeb, Guru Har Rai helped Dara and even placed a contingent of armed soldiers at his disposal.²¹ According to Dr. Trilochan Singh, there is no evidence to support the position that Guru Har Rai actually helped Dara.²² Dr. Trilochan Singh says that to him it is quite clear that Guru Har Rai gave no military or moral assistance to Dara and as advised by his illustrious and farsighted predecessor, he scrupulously kept out of the war of succession.²³

When Aurangzeb occupied the throne a new phase began in the Mughal-Sikh relations. He asked Guru Har Rai to appear in the court. Ram Rai was sent there. His behaviour at the court earned him the displeasure of Guru Har Rai and it was owing to his machinations that later on Aurangzeb got the excuse for asking Guru Harkishan to come to Delhi in order to decide as to who was the rightful heir to Guru Har Rai.

The Gurus were aware of the nature of the Mughal state. Their perception, however, transcended the consideration of the immediate problems they themselves faced. They were conscious of the centuries of suppression to which the people of Punjab, specially the Hindus had been subjected. But they never lost sight of their basic perception of oneness of mankind.

(20) Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr*. P 106 quotes Macauliffe. *The Sikh Religion*. P. 278-79

(21) Teja Singh, *Ganda Singh History of the Sikhs* P.48

(22) Op. cit. 20. P.99

(23) Op. cit. 21. P.107

Wedding Party of Lust

Babar has descended on India with the wedding party of lust.
And forcibly demands surrender of India's womanhood.
Decency and law have hidden themselves;

And evil is strutting about in triumph.

Mohammedan and Hindu priests are discarded and Satan is
making marriages;

The Mohammedan women mutter the Koran and invoke their
God in their hour of distress

So also are in panic the women of Hindu faith and the lower
castes

Nanak, blood is the theme of hymnal for such a wedding.
Blood is also the saffron paste to suit it.

In the city of corpses, Nanak sings praises of the Lord and
proclaims His law.

Guru Nanak

A.G. P. 722

CENTURIES OF SUPPRESSION

The Hindu and Sikh tradition regarding the oppression let loose by Aurangzeb perhaps exaggerates political, social and economic deprivation of the Hindus.¹ The whole of the Muslim period in the history of India cannot be considered as a crusade against Hindu religion and culture. The Muslim kings were not only protectors of Islam, they had also to rule over the territories occupied by them. The demands of administration and the compulsions of statecraft, the feudal nature of the polity, the need for help from the non-Muslim feudal chiefs for consolidating and extending the territories of the empire in a country which was still the land of the 'infidels', did help the Hindus to survive the cruelties inflicted on them and the humiliation heaped on them. The restraining hand of the Sufi saints also helped the Hindus. The Hindus had undergone suppression for almost six and half centuries before Aurangzeb embarked upon his campaign of converting India into the land of the faithful believers in Islam, negating thereby the process of national reconciliation initiated by his illustrious predecessor, Akbar.

The harassment of the Hindus had started with the annexation of Punjab in the year 1026. The tidal waves of Muslim invaders succeeded in demolishing one Hindu Kingdom after the other and the people of Afghanistan, Punjab and Kashmir embraced Islam enmasse.² Mahmud Ghazni and his successors took pride in demolishing Hindu temples and humiliating Hindus for both temporal and religious reasons. The robber's greed fortified the fanatic's zeal. The demolition of

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- (1) According to Gian Singh, author of *Twarikh Guru Khalsa* in the reign of Aurangzeb people believed that Aurangzeb and the officers of the Mughal Empire daily collected sacred threads weighing one and a quarter maund. (P.698)
- (2) To say nothing of the enjoyment of any kind of rights the Hindus were in danger. S.L.Shrivastva. quoted by Abdul Rashid. *Society and culture in Medieval India* P.217

temples filled the coffers of the invading kings as well as satisfied their iconoclastic urges.

The reign of terror let loose by the invaders helped them in consolidating their hold over the people and the demolition of temples and the breaking of idols destroyed the self identity of the subjugated people, and promoted the imperial design of the invading armies. The invading kings naturally found fertile ground for further recruitment of soldiers to their armies from amongst the new converts.³ These converts not only provided military muscle to the imperialist regimes but also, a secure political base to the invaders. Owing to ideological and theological compulsions the Muslim invaders did not want to adopt the Indian cultural traditions and customs. On the contrary they wished to change the very religious and cultural life of the people in the territories occupied by them. In this respect they were unlike other invaders who subjugated the people of India politically but were able to integrate themselves with the religious and cultural traditions of India and had become a part of the Indian social scene. Their occupation of the Indian territories thus did not create emotional trauma and a sense of socio-cultural deprivation on the part of the Indian people.

There was, thus a radical change in the relations between the invading kings and the people in the territories conquered by them. The process of Islamisation of India began with Sabukatgin's attack on the North West of India under king Jaipal.⁴ He conquered the Bannu district and converted people forcibly and incorporated the territory in his own kingdom. In the territory of Lamghan he massacred the inhabitants and carried women and children and cattle as booty. He destroyed temples and built mosques in their place. His son Mahmud Ghazni followed the same policy and converted the areas

(3) C.V. Vaidya. History of Medieval Hindu India. P.28

(4) Op. cit. 3 P. 28-33

between the river Kurram and Kabul into Mohammedan lands.⁵ Mahamud Ghazni's attacks on Nagarkot, Mathura and Somnath were motivated by his desire to gather riches and to destroy these temples.⁶

When Mathura fell to the might of Mahmud Ghazni's hordes, temples were demolished, idols broken and the city ransacked. The booty which Mahmud got has been described by Utbi.

"And among the mass of idols there were five idols made of pure gold, of the height of five cubits and one had a jacinth which the Sultan would have bought for fifty thousand Dinars and another had a sapphire of azure water of one solid piece weighing four hundred miskals. From the feet of that idols they got 400 miskals weight of gold. Of silver the idols were so many that they who estimated their weights took a long time in weighing them. They devastated all that city and the Sultan passed therefrom towards Kanoj leaving the greater Parts of his army there."⁷

Mahmud Ghazni's invasions were followed by the invasions of Shihab-ud-Din Ghorī who conquered Multan in 1178.⁸ In 1179 he conquered Lahore by defeating Khasrau who belonged to the line of Mahmud Ghazni. This followed attacks on Delhi and Ajmer. Destruction of temples was an inevitable consequence of the victories won by Shihab-ud-din Ghorī. Here is a description of the temples of Banaras, destroyed by him.

"The royal army proceeded to Banaras and there one thousand temples were destroyed and the face of Dinar and Darham was adorned with the blessed name and title of the king."⁹

(5) C.V. Vaidya. History of Hindu Medieval India. P.33-37

(6) Op. cit. 6. P. 33

(7) Op. cit. 5. P. 74-75

(8) Op. cit. 5. P. 23-31

(9) C.V. Vaidya. Medieval Hindu India. P. 344

When Kutub-ud-Din attacked Kalanjar, temples were destroyed in large numbers and were converted into mosques and fifty thousand men were taken into slavery. ¹⁰ Bakhtiar Khalji who was Governor of Mirzapur under Shihab-ud-Din Ghorī is reported to have killed the Buddhist monks in Vikramsilla and thrown away all their books.¹¹

Mahmud Ghazni and later on Shihab-ud-Din Ghorī followed the policy of converting the people of the conquered territories to Islam. As a result, during the period 975-1025 most of the population of the territories conquered was forcibly converted to Islam in the lands west of Indus, i.e. Kabul, Zabulstan and Punjab. Punjab became generally Mohammedan by the end of the period 1200 AD. The hilly portions of Punjab and parts of Kashmir which still retained independence remained Hindu. In Eastern Punjab the policy of conversions was abandoned for political reasons. Besides Kutub-ud-din and Altmash were not fanatics.

During all the military campaigns of the Muslim rulers, irrespective of the purpose of these campaigns, the Hindus were subjected to worst possible persecution. These campaigns, resulted in large scale enslavements of the Hindus and the demolition of temples. Here is an account of Ala-ud-Din Khalji's campaign in Gujarat.

The vein of zeal of religion beat high for subjection of infidelity and destruction of idols. With a view to holy war, not for lust of conquest, he enlisted about 14000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry. The Mohammedan forces began to kill and slaughter on the right and the left unmercifully throughout the impure lands for the sake of Islam and blood flowed in torrents. They took captive great number of handsome and elegant maidens numbering to 20,000 and children of both sexes. In short the Mohammedans brought the country to utter ruin and

(10) Op. cit. 9. P. 351

(11) Op. cit. 9. P. 353

plundered the cities.... so that many temples were destroyed and idols trodden underfoot the largest of which was one called Somnath... The fragments were conveyed to Delhi and the entrance of Jama Masjid was paved so that people might remember and talk of this victory.¹²

This campaign was undertaken in 1298 AD. It was directed against the Hindu king of Gujarat.

Ala-ud-Din Khalji attacked Gujarat and occupied the city of Somnath. The famous temple of Somnath was plundered. Another idol had been installed in the temple after it had been plundered by Mahmud Ghazni. This idol was sent to Delhi where it was laid down for the faithful to tread upon. Ala-ud-Din had also taken effective steps to decrease the financial power of his revenue officers who were mostly Hindus and completely demoralised them. This was despite the fact that he tried to separate the state from the Church¹³. Despite his admirable qualities Ghias-ud-Din Tughlaq dealt with his Hindu subjects most severely. He proclaimed an ordinance that 'there should be left only so much to the Hindus that neither, on the one hand should they become intoxicated on account of their wealth, nor on the other hand they should become so destitute as to leave their lands and cultivation in despair. As R.C.Majumdar has pointed out the position of Hindus in the Islamic state of Delhi did not depend on the character and personality of the king but was determined on the Quranic policy in those days. This was clearly based on discrimination between Hindus and Muslims¹⁴.

Timur attacked India in 1398 and fought mostly against Muslim kings. His invasion marked the end of the Tughlaq dynasty. This is how he celebrated his victory over the garrison

(12) R.C.Majumdar. Hindu Muslim Relations. Delhi Sultanate. Ed. R.C.Majumdar P.624-625. Also see - S-Roy-Khalji Dyansty -p.19.20

(13) Op. cit. 12. P.623

(14) R.C.Majumdar. (Ghias-ud-din Tughlaq) Delhi Sultanate P.59

at Dipalpur which had a Hindu chief owing allegiance to his Muslim overlords.

'In a period of short time all the people in the fort were put to death and in the course of one hour the heads of ten thousand infidels were cut off. The sword of Islam was washed in the blood of the infidels. They (my soldiers) set fire to the houses and reduced them to ashes and they razed the buildings and the fort to the ground'.¹⁵

Timur's attack on Delhi was against a Muslim king. All the same he killed one lakh infidels on the occasion. When his orders came to be known to the Ghazis of Islam they drew their swords and put their prisoners to death. 1,00,000 infidels, impious idolaters were on that day slain.¹⁶

Sikander Lodi was a capable administrator and military commander but he was not tolerant of other faiths.¹⁶ The author of Twarikh-i-Wassf writes about Sikander Lodhi that 'He was a zealous Musalman that utterly destroyed the diverse infidels and left not a vestige remaining of them. He entirely ruined the shrines of Mathura, the mine of heathenism, and turned their principal Hindu places of worship into caravan-sarais and colleges. Their stone images were given to the butchers to serve them as meat weights and all the Hindus in Mathura were strictly prohibited from shaving their heads and beards and performing their ablutions.¹⁷

Like Aurangzeb, Sikander Lodi was also a fanatic and tried to regiment the life of the Muslims as well. He banned the Muslim women's visits to the tombs of Muslim saints. He also banned the carrying of Tazias during Muharram. There was a cruel streak in him which made him intolerant and of course he had the earlier rulers to emulate in this respect.

(15) R.C.Majumdar. Tughlaq Dynasty. from Delhi Sultanate. P.115-126

(16) Hamid-ud-din. The Lodhis. from Delhi Sultanate. P.146-147

(17) Op. cit. 16. P. 137-146

The case of Bodhan Brahmin is illustrative of his intolerance. This Brahmin had the audacity to equate Islam and Hinduism by saying that both the religions contained truth. The poor Brahmin was put to death on imperial orders.¹⁸

Daulat Khan Lodi the Governor of Punjab invited Babur to settle scores with the Muslim Lodi rulers at Delhi. The invading armies of Babur indulged in rapine and plunder.

By the middle of the fifteenth century a large number of Hindus had been converted to Islam. The conversions were not only confined to lower classes. In many cases tribes belonging to Khatri class embraced Islam. Of course, all the conversions were not forcible conversions. The Sufi saints had also helped in the spread of Islam in Punjab and Sind. The common Hindu was not perpetually at war with the common Muslim but the excesses of the political system and the frequent invasions from across the river Attock and the dynastic wars reminded the non-Muslims of their vulnerability and their inferior socio-political, cultural position and this consciousness bred in them a sense of sullen acceptance of their fate.

The very fact that the Hindus had the status¹⁹ of Zimmis under the Muslim state, even if the Muslim kings were kind and considerate, the Hindus could not escape a certain amount of persecution and harassment. They perceived themselves as second rate citizens at best, or the slaves of their Muslim masters. Their right to property and life was perpetually in danger. The fanatics among the Muslim Ulema wanted to implement the ideal of completely annihilating the Hindu population by offering them the choice between life and death. It was, however, impossible in a country like India, to achieve this ideal because even in the dominions directly under the Muslims, Hindus were in an overwhelming majority. Further-

(18) Hamid-ud-din (The Lodis) from Delhi Sultanate. P.148

(19) A.Rashid. Society and culture in Medieval India. P.219 According to Nur-ud-din Mubarak Rizvi the kings must instil disgrace and dishonour in the Hindus who are the worst enemies of God and Prophet.

more, there were a large number of non-Muslim feudatory states. The status of Zimmis also conferred certain rights on the non-Muslims under the Muslim system of Jurisprudence. As Zimmis they had the right to repair their temples.

The fact that the Muslim invaders decided to settle in India permanently and had to live among the Hindus, the demands of the ensuing commercial and social interaction, the exposure to the Hindu culture and the impact of Islam on the Hindu sensibility, the rise of the Sufi and Bhakti movements, did tend to build the bridges of understanding and blunt the edge of mutual intolerance on the social level and made the Muslim state more tolerant of the theological dissent within Islam and other creeds.²⁰ We learn about the erection of new temples in the environs of Delhi being granted waqf by Sher Shah and of Hindus holding important positions and prospering in trade and commerce. These extracts from Fatwa Ferozeshahi make an interesting reading.

Q. Is a Muslim soldier allowed to kill a Hindu captive?

Ans. No.

Q. If a Zimmi falls ill and a Musalman goes to visit the sick, is he allowed to do so?

Ans. Yes.

Q. If an old temple has fallen into ruins and the Zimmis want to repair it and erect a building, will the Sharra allow him to do so?

Ans. Yes.

Q. Is it obligatory on the part of Zimmis to pay tax on their residential houses?

Ans. No.

Q. If a zimmi brings a waste land into cultivation, would he, in law become its owner?

Ans. Yes.

But during the frequent wars in medieval India even these concessions became inoperative. The dynastic wars in medieval India were quite frequent as is borne out by the fact that the average life of a Muslim dynasty was not more than sixty years. During these wars large scale destruction of property (specially

(20) A Rashid. Society and culture in Medieval India P. 227

that of temples) took place. The large scale killing of men, women and children and ruthless enslavement of civilian population, the religious zeal of the conquering hordes which made them think that the killing of Kaffirs was an act of religious merit, could not but make the non-Muslims feel hostile to the rulers and since this hostility could not be channelised the mood of the non Muslim populace was that of sullen submission to their inescapable fate.

The liberal Muslim theological influences, the kindness of the Emperors, the consideration shown by God fearing officers did, to some extent, soothe the non-Muslim feelings but constant discrimination and the imposition of Jizya could hardly make the non-believers appreciate the current political set up.

The Mughul Emperors had the foresight of entering into a sort of alliance with the Rajput chiefs for the purpose of empire building and the consolidation of their hold over the territories conquered by them. It was mainly owing to the policy of reconciliation adopted by Mughul Emperors that the Mughal empire could last for over two and a half centuries. Akbar abolished Jizya and abandoned the policy of demolishing Hindu temples. He made Hindus partners in power and gave to Hindus positions of power and prestige. The process of national reconciliation initiated by Akbar was completely reversed by Aurangzeb.

Kal Kati Raje Kasae

The age is turned knife, rulers butchers;
Righteousness has flown away on wings
This is the dark night of evil;
The moon of righteousness is visible nowhere
I have groped and groped to madness
In this thick darkness, no path is visible
The whole world wails in suffering, gripped in egoism
Says Nanak, by what means relief may come?

Guru Nanak.
AG P. 145

AURANGZEB'S RELIGIOUS POLICY FIRES OF FANATICISM

There was a remarkable change in the Mughal religious policy when Aurangzeb ascended the throne. As a matter of fact the process of the reversal of Akbar's policies had started immediately after his death. Guru Arjan's martyrdom was the beginning of this process. It was also the beginning of Sikh-Mughal confrontation. This must, however, be conceded that the Mughal Emperors were comparatively more liberal in their attitudes to the Hindus than their predecessors. Akbar tried to follow a policy of national reconciliation by abolishing Jizya and by entering into a partnership with Rajputs for sharing political power. With his death the Ulema tried to gain control of the polity. When Aurangzeb established himself as the Emperor, the Mughal state was converted into a theocratic state. As R.C.Majumdar has stated, the persecution of the Hindus was the most distinguished aspect of the policy of Aurangzeb.¹

It is stated that Aurangzeb followed the anti-Hindu policy to make his Muslim subjects forget the crimes that he had committed against his father and brothers and wanted to create for himself the image of being the protector of Islam.² But as a matter of fact the departure from liberalism of earlier Emperors was not actuated, exclusively, by such considerations of image building, or the compulsions of state craft. Aurangzeb's religious policy had ideological compulsions at its core. Babar, too, had indulged in acts of vandalism and destruction. That way, even in the reign of Akbar one can come across incidents which point to the inferior position of Hindus in the Mughal Empire. The Governor of Lahore, Hussain Khan, issued an order that the Hindus should stick patches of different colour on their shoulders or on the bottom of their sleeves so that the Muslims

(1) R.C. Majumdar. *The Mughal Empire*. Vol. vii page xiv

(2) James Todd. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*. Vol I. P.302. Quoted by Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr*. P.264

did not mistake them for believers and show them undue respect. He also ordered that the Hindus should use pack saddles when riding. In Dera Ghazi Khan Hindus were forbidden to ride horses. They could not even ride donkeys.³

But as compared to the policies pursued by Aurangzeb, the religious policies of earlier Mughals were policies of religious *laissez faire* and naturally did not suit the theological and temporal ambitions of the Muslim orthodoxy. The orthodox Ulema had even begun to brand Akbar a non-Muslim.

It can not be denied that Aurangzeb needed the help of Sunni orthodoxy to consolidate his position. He got the orthodox Mullahs declare that Dara was a Kaffir. But it can also be not denied that Aurangzeb was a bigot and it made him more acceptable to the Sunni theologians who had been upset by the limited liberality of the Mughal Emperors towards their non-believer citizens.

Aurangzeb claimed the throne as the champion of Sunni orthodoxy and subordinated⁴ his judgement to the orthodox Sunni theological interpretation of the duties of a Muslim king regarding the protection of Islam and ensuring proselytising opportunities for the spread of Islam and would resort to even violence to convert infidels. Being a bigot he was sure of the correctness of his view. Being intolerant of dissent he did not allow his own co-religionists to disagree with him. His religious policy was not shaped by compulsions of socio-political situation or considerations of personal advantage. At the base of his policy was his strict adherence to the Islamic theory of kingship.

Aurangzeb was a man of austere habits. He adhered to Islamic tenets with the severity of a fanatic, says E.B.Hawell (A short History of India)⁵. Of course he had no hesitation to enlist the help of infidel Rajput chiefs like Raja Jaswant Singh,

(3) Shri Ram Sharma Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors

(4) J.N.Chaudhary article on Aurangzeb. Mughal Empire. P.233

(5) E.B.Hawell. A Short History of India P.170

in his fight against Dara and later on to suppress the Sunni Afridi tribesmen of the North West. But he had set for himself the task of making the whole of India conform to the laws of Islam as interpreted by himself and the orthodox Ulema.

Despite his personal piety he had not much use for ethical considerations. He did not spare even his friends and with extreme care and cunning even conspired against Hindu chieftains and vassal kings who were otherwise faithful to him but would not give up the faith of their forefathers and were, even in a limited sense, sympathetic to their co-religionists because he perceived them as obstacles in the path of Islamisation of the sub-continent.

His piety was not an expression of his regrets for the cruelty inflicted by him on his brothers and father. He 'perfectly felt at ease for the treatment meted out to them. He believed that the rules of morality do not apply to state affairs.

As a matter of fact a bigot does not have much concern for the niceties of moral values. The end in his eyes, justifies the means. In the case of Aurangzeb, all these acts of cruelty were absolutely essential for carrying out the crusade against the infidels. He championed the forces of orthodoxy and fought against the liberal minded Dara Shukoh whom he regarded as a heretic.⁶ The clash between him and Dara was a clash of two ideologies. Dara stood for a liberal, tolerant, broad based political culture which ensures a liberal social system. Aurangzeb stood for a political culture which breeds intolerance and does not even tolerate dissent within the same religious system. Aurangzeb, with his eyes focussed on the element of intolerance in the Islamic political and theological traditions could justify his actions even from the theological point of view.⁷

(6) J.N.Chaudhary. Article. in *The Mughal Empire*. Ed. R. C. Majumdar. P. 233

(7) Quran K.5-8. When the Sacred month of Ramadan comes to an end then call those people who associate other gods with the Almighty. Put them to death whenever you meet them

‘Tell the non-believers if they renounce their faith, their sins will be forgiven but if they revert to their old faith, fight against them till all differences are overcome and God’s religion embraces all.’⁸

In the case of Aurangzeb there could be no dichotomy between his personal piety and austerity and intolerant state policy because he could find theological legitimacy in such excerpts from Quran as this. It is correctly pointed that Aurangzeb was no more intolerant than his contemporaries. But by following the policy of religious intolerance he did reverse the process of religious reconciliation and let loose the process of reaction. He not only harassed Hindus but also the liberal minded Muslims saints and mystics.

The Sikh, Rajput and Bohra tradition represents him as a tyrant. His religious policy proved fatal not only to the interest of the Mughal Empire but also irrevocably damaged the Indian composite culture and the secular psyche.⁹ He discouraged secularism and fanned the fires of fanaticism among his co-religionists. His persecution of Guru Tegh Bahadur was also an emanation of his fanatic zeal. Guru Tegh Bahadur, as a non-Muslim-religious leader with growing influence symbolised non-Muslim resistance to Aurangzeb’s unjust policies.⁹

(8) Encyclopaedia of Islam. P.39-42

(9) Benoven Williams. E.Daniel Potts. Essays in Indian History. Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh Conflict of ideologies. Ghulam Mohd. Raffai P.139

SUPPRESSION OF MUSLIM DISSENT

The Hindu and Sikh tradition emphasises upon the anti-Hindu policies of Aurangzeb. It does not highlight the fact that the Emperor was extremely intolerant of the dissent within the orbit of Islam. Fanaticism, like, charity begins at home. Liberality towards dissenters among the co-religionists weakens the ideological position of a fanatic who aims at absolute conformity to his perceptions and theological notions. If such a man cannot impose his own perception on his own co-religionists, he feels, he shall not be able to impose his ideas on adherents of other faiths whom he wants to convert to his faith. As a matter of fact, whereas Aurangzeb indulged in large scale persecution of the non-Muslims whom he wanted to convert to Islam enmasse, through terror or temptation, he was not less ruthless in persecuting dissenting Muslim divines and was equally anxious to bring the Shias into the orthodox Sunni fold. ¹

Suppression of dissent within the Muslim fraternity itself is a sure proof of his fanaticism and intolerance.

When Aurangzeb ascended the throne, the Sunni orthodox theologians also acquired a sure ascendancy over the liberal Shia and Sufi schools of thought. The Sunni Ulema acquired the power to have a decisive voice in shaping the religious policies of the Mughal empire. However, Aurangzeb who wanted to make the state a proselytising instrument in the service of Islam, had to dismiss his Sadr-us-Sadur who questioned his right to the throne of the Empire while his father was still alive. Despite the fact, that of all the Mughals, he alone wanted to subordinate his statecraft completely to orthodox Sunni diktats, he had to face a lot of opposition from his own co-religionists who were either non-Sunnis or did not

(1) Shri Ram Sharma. The Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors.
P.134

share his perception regarding the relationship between religion and politics²

Under the influence of Khwaja Mohammad Masum son of Mujadid Ahmed Sirhindi, he had made up his mind to turn the Mughal state into an ideal Muslim state and wanted to run the affairs of the state strictly in accordance with the Islamic theory of kingship according to which the ruler must enforce the Quranic law in the administration of his empire³

Aurangzeb got many Muslim Pirs and Faqirs beheaded. They included many Sayyads and religious leaders belonging to Qadri, Chisti, Firdosi, Khoja and Bohra orders.⁴

Sheikh Yahya Chisti, a well known saint of Ahmedabad refused to follow Aurangzeb's ban on music and was harassed by censors. He protested to Aurangzeb who was one of his devotees. The Emperor had to relax the ban on music in Muslim religious assemblies and instructed his agents at Ahmedabad not to harass the Sheikh.⁵

In 1669 he banned the celebration of Moharram and tried to enforce these orders strictly. Many Muslims were imprisoned for violating these orders and many Shia priests and Imams were imprisoned.⁶ Shia Muzzeins and Imams were made to kiss the gallows. He also banned the practice of lighting lamps on the graves of Muslim Pirs.

J.N. Sarkar tells us that the Momins of Gujarat were the followers of Imam-ud-Din. They would kiss his toes and donate 1/10th of their income to their leader. Aurangzeb ordered that

(2) Shri Ram Sharma. The Religious policy of Mughal Emperors P.214

(3) The Mughal Empire. Ed. R.C. Majumdar. Essay by J.N. Chaudhary P.233.

(4) N.D. Ahuja. Vir Satygrahi. Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur from Guru Tegh Bahadur. Jiwan Sama te Rachna. P.88

(5) Op. cit 2. P. 132-33

(6) Op. cit 2. P.131

the Sayyad should appear in his court⁷. It is alleged that he was poisoned.⁸

Aurangzeb also tried to regiment the life of the Khojas and asked their leader Sayyad Shahi to appear in his court. But the Sayyad preferred death to a meeting with Aurangzeb. The death of the minor son of the Sayyad in royal custody caused a revolt. The followers of the Sayyad marched to Ahmedabad to register their protest⁹ and the Faujdar of Bharoch tried to prevent them from crossing Narmada. Four hundred Khojas attacked and occupied Bharoch. They had later to pay heavily for their revolt when the city was captured again by Mughal armies. All Khoja hard core supporters were killed¹⁰

The religious leader of Bohras with his seven hundred disciples was put to death.¹¹ Mulla Shah Badakashi who was a follower of Mian Mir, was harassed by Aurangzeb because he had been held in high esteem by shahjahan and Dara and would not care for royalty because he was a man of dignity.¹²

Qmir was beheaded because he had written a book with arguments which the Muslim theologian could not refute.

Sheikh Niamatullah Qadri was summoned from Bengal. He was Pir Murshid of Shahjahan. He was harassed and even the members of his family were not spared.¹³

Similarly Sheikh Muhib-Ullah's disciples were called to the court and asked to declare their lack of faith in the Sheikh.¹⁴

Basing himself on the chronicles of the time, professor N.D.Ahuja has given a long list of Muslim Divines who were done to death by the Emperor because they had unorthodox

(7) J.N.Sarkar. Aurangzeb. (Hindi) P.228-9.

(8) Op. cit 7 P. 228-9.

(9) Shri Ram Sharma The Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors P.131.

(10) Op. cit 7 P.177

(11) J.N.Sarkar. Aurangzeb. (Hindi) P.178

(12) Op. cit. 11. P. 175

(13) Op. cit 11 P. 177

(14) J.N. Sarkar Aurangzeb (Hindi) P.178

ideas. Hassan Malik, the well known scholar from Kashmir was put to death because his liberal views could not be appreciated by the orthodox.¹⁵

Sarmad a Shia Divine was beheaded for his blasphemous utterances and his faith in the omnipresence of God¹⁶

Diwan Mohammad Tahir - a Shia was executed for his disrespectful utterances against the first three Califs.¹⁷

The Bohras were Shias. Aurangzeb imposed Sunni Imams on them and also made modification in their mosques.¹⁸ The Bohras did not resist openly but continued observing Hindu practices and Hindu laws of inheritance. Ismaili leader Qutab was beheaded on orders from Aurangzeb.¹⁹

According to N.D. Ahuja Hallaji Sufis were brutally killed . Dewan Mohammad Tahir was beheaded in 1672, for his disrespectful utterances against the first three Califs. A Portugues Muslim was sentenced to death when he reverted to Christianity. Twelve Sayyads of Delhi who were supporters of Dara, were done to death after being branded as fake fakirs. Sheikh Muhib Allah of Allahabad was persecuted for one of his scholarly books. Mir Murtaza Waiz of Multan was so much harassed that he had to commit suicide. Shah Daula Gujrati Shah Sadr-ud-Din Shah Hassan Lahori were tortured and harassed.²⁰

Aurangzeb tried to make the Mughal state a Muslim theocracy. Under him the state became a large missionary institution which made favours to renegades and made liberal promises irrespective of merit and efficiency.²¹

Under him the state not only extended favours to the new

(15) N.D. Ahuja. Alamgiri Myth and Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.18-21

(16) Op. cit 15. P.22

(17) Shri Ram Sharma. The Religious policy of Mughal Emperors. P.134

(18) J.N. Sarkar. Aurangzeb. (Hindi) P.228-29

(19) Op. cit 17. P. 134

(20) Op. cit. 15. P.22

converts or discriminated against the infidels. It also tried to regulate and regiment the life of Muslims. It could not tolerate non-conformity, punished dissent and harassed non-Sunni adherents of Islam. Aurangzeb appointed officers called the Muhtasibs and entrusted them with the duty of enforcing Sunni puritanic laws.

The State under Aurangzeb did not recognise the concept of personal freedom. It became absolutely oppressive. Ridiculous laws were made. The length of beard supported by a muslim was fixed at four inches. Even the length of Salwar (trousers) worn by the Muslims was regulated by the state. Wearing gold embroidered cloth was made a religious offence²² Knives with bone handles were banned.²³ Sale and purchase of toys representing animal forms and human figures were banned.²⁴

In 1668 he banned music and dismissed the musicians. In the same year practice of Jharokha Darshan was stopped. He also stopped the practice of Tula Dan. He ordered that the gold and silver objects must be removed from the court. The Hindu Rajas were forbidden to apply Tilaks on their foreheads.²⁵ Drinking was forbidden and women were forbidden from visiting shrines of holy men.²⁶

Aurangzeb stood for ultra theological principles. A systematic policy of iconoclasm was followed by him. At the same time he made the Muslim fraternity conform strictly to the rules laid down by Shariat. He could not brook any deviation even on the part of common Muslims, from the strict theological stipulations.

(21) Ishwari Prashad. The Mughal Empire. P.584

(22) Shri Ram Sharma The Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors. P.108

(23) Op. cit 22.P.104

(24) I.B. Bannerji. Evolution of the Khalsa. P.58

(25) Op. cit 22. P.108

(26) Op. cit 22. P.108

HARASSMENT OF HINDUS

Aurangzeb dealt with dissenters within the orbit of Islam with a heavy hand to ensure the uniformity of Muslim behaviour and belief in accordance with Sunni perception of the Islamic law as interpreted by the Ulema.

His attitude towards the Hindus was even more severe. His alliance with the Rajput Chiefs did not dampen his religious zeal. His anti-Hindu attitudes were apparent even when he was the Governor of Gujrat. As far back as in 1645 he had converted the Chintaman temple into a mosque.¹ This temple was, however, restored to the Hindus on intervention by Shahjahan.²

Bigotry and fanaticism characterised his policy towards the Hindus. Even as a prince he had been patronising the orthodox Ulema clamouring for the reversal of the liberal religious policy pursued by Akbar who had made a bold attempt at ending discrimination against the Hindus, in matters of taxation, employment, religious and cultural affairs. He wanted to end irritants to the non-Muslims caused by discriminatory laws in customs, excise and taxation dues. He even made it possible for the non-Muslims to occupy high positions in administration.³

Akbar's successors were responsive to pressure from the anti-liberal lobby. During the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan, Akbar's ideal of non-theocratic state received a set back. Jahangir was less liberal than Akbar and Shahjahan was less liberal than Jahangir. The number of Hindus in high position declined drastically. The percentage of Hindus in higher services could not have been more than 50% during the reign

(1) Shri Ram Sharma. Religious policy of Mughal Emperors. P. 169

(2) Shri Ram Sharma The Crescent in India. P. 559

(5) Op. cit 1 P. 98

of Aurangzeb as compared to what it was towards the end of Shahjahan's reign.⁴ Of course, it must also be noted that some of the Rajput feudal lords like Raja Jai Singh and Raja Jaswant Singh occupied some of the highest positions in the Administrative set up.

This departure from the liberalism was not actuated by considerations of administrative strategy. It had the ideological compulsions at its core. Babar, too, had indulged in anti-Hindu acts of vandalism and destruction.⁵ But as compared to the policies pursued by Aurangzeb the policies of earlier Mughals appeared to be the policies of religious laissez-faire and naturally did not suit the theological and temporal ambitions of Muslim orthodoxy. The orthodox Muslim clergy had begun to brand Akbar a non-Muslim.⁶ The change in the religious policy of the post Akbar era was caused by the gradual ascendancy of the Naqashbandi school of thought which considered Hindus as Kaffirs. In order to acquire legitimacy Aurangzeb had to side with the orthodox clergy as the thought that it was of advantage to him to project this war for succession as a struggle for the ascendancy of orthodox Sunni Ulema. He wanted to create for himself the image of a zealous protector of Islam. He got the orthodox Mullas declare that Dara was a Kaffir. He convinced Murad that he was not interested in the throne but in destroying Dara.⁷

However, there is no denying the fact that Aurangzeb's religious policy was based on his own convictions.⁸ He was ever eager to increase the number of Muslims and his policy did result in subordinating the Mughal state to the orthodox Ulema.

(4) Shri Ram Sharma. Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors. P.98

(5) Op. cit. 4.P.98

(6) S.Roy, Akbar. The Mughal Empire. Ed. R.C. Majumdar. P.133-36

(7) Bhai Jodh Singh. Article in Guru Tegh Bahadur. Jiwan Samme te Rachne

(8) Fauja Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.68-69

As a matter of fact upto 1659 his religious policies were reasonably correct. It is evident from the Royal Firman of 1659 which stated:-

“it has been decided, according to our canon law; standing temples should not be demolished but no new temples be allowed to be built. Our Royal command is that in future no person shall in an unlawful way interfere with or disturb the Brahmin or other Hindu residents in these places”.⁹

But his order did not cover military operations. Temples were demolished to mark the triumph of Mughal offensive against Palamau and the Royal attack on Kuch Bihar in 1666.¹⁰

The Royal firman notwithstanding, the stone railing of the Keshav Rai temple was removed by the Emperor's orders. The railing had been presented to the temple by Dara Shukoh.¹¹ The temple had been built by Rao Bir Singh Bundhela at a cost of Rs. 33,00000. Aurangzeb ordered its demolition and a mosque was built at it's site.¹² In 1670 Matthura was renamed Islamabad.¹³

Shri Ram Sharma has given a list of temples demolished on orders from Aurangzeb.

Lalita Temple at Delhi

Temples of Malirana (Jaipur) destroyed on Imperial orders sent specially by a messenger.

Vishvanath temple at Benaras. Aug. 1669

(9) This Firman was granted to a priest of Banaras in 1659 J.N. Chaudhary. Aurangzeb. Mughal Empire. P.234 Ed. R.C. Majumdar. However in 1964 he forbade the repairs of the of the temple.

(10) Jadu Nath Sarkar Aurangzeb (Hindi) P.113

(11) Jadu Nath Sarkar. Aurangzeb. (Hindi) P.113

(12) Op. cit. 11. P.113

(13) Op. cit 11. P.113

Gopi Nath temple at Banaras. Aug. 1669

Vallabhcharya temple at Mathura.¹⁴

At Surat the Brahmins were asked to pay a large sum of protection money.¹⁵

In November 1665 the Emperor issued orders that Holi should not be celebrated. In the same year Deepavali celebrations were also banned.¹⁶ In 1669 similar restrictions were imposed in Delhi.¹⁷ In 1668 Aurangzeb banned the holding of Hindu festivals in pilgrimage centres.

On first April 1665 it was so ordered that the Muslims were to pay 2.5% customs duty and the Hindus 5%.¹⁸ In 1667 orders were issued that Muslims should be exempted from the payment of this duty.¹⁹ However this duty of 2.5% was reimposed on the Muslims in 1682.²⁰

Similar distinction was made in the case of horticulture. Hindus were to pay 20% and Muslims 16.6%. In 1669-70 it was ordered that the Hindus were to pay a tax of 5% on the price of the cattle and Muslims were to pay 2.5%.²¹

In 1671 orders to appoint only Muslims as tax collectors were issued. Later on keeping in view the practical consideration it was decided that revenue officers should be 50% Muslims. A Hindu could easily become a Qanungo by becoming Muslim.²²

(14) Shri Ram Sharma. Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors. P.183

(15) Op. cit 14. P.182

(16) Op. cit 14. P.182

(17) Op. cit 14. p.182

(18) Jadu Nath Sarkar. Aurangzeb. Hindi. P.114

(19) Op. cit. 18. P.113

(20) Shri Ram Sharma. Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors. P.114

(21) Op. cit. 20. P.114

(22) Op. cit. 20. p.114

Aurangzeb used the entire might of the state to swell the ranks of the believers. Corrupt officials were reinstated if they accepted Islam. Those who left the faith of their forefathers were accorded undue favour and Zamindaris of their Hindus kith were conferred on them. Even the loyal supporters of the states were not spared this indignity of being supplanted by their sons who embraced Islam. Criminals who accepted Islam were freed and murderers were pardoned their crimes on accepting Islam.

On conversion to Islam gifts were showered, promotions given, prisoners set free and property cases decided in favour of the converts.²³ Whatever be the crime committed by a person he could expiate for it by becoming a Muslim. Rebels could wash off their rebellion, felons their felonies, whereas minor acts of embezzlement could be easily compounded by entry into the charmed circle of the faithful.

Aurangzeb considered conversions as a part of his Imperial policy. The state sponsored conversions had not much to do with convictions. The wonder is that despite such persecution and temptations a majority of Hindus stuck to their Hindu identity and despite the constant demoralisation and debasement they put up resistance to state policies.²⁴ This resistance, of course, was not sustained. Even in the midst of decay and moral degradation the Indian psyche evolved systems of thought which not only strengthened the instinct for survival but also epitomised, the yearning for spiritual fulfillment, self respect and a sense of dignity.

(23) Shri Ram Sharma. Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors P.203

(24) Jadu Nath Sarkar. Aurangzeb. (Hindi) P. 114

HINDU RESISTANCE AND CONSEQUENT DEMORALISATION

Aurangzeb's oppressive religious policy evoked protests at the grass root level but these protests were crushed with a heavy hand and failed to have any appreciable impact on the attitude of the Emperor whose iconoclastic zeal overcame the moderating compulsions of statecraft. After the death of Raja Jai Singh and Rana Jaswant Singh Aurangzeb became even more ruthless in suppressing the Hindus.¹

Abdus-un-Nabbi Khan, the Faujdar of Mathura (1660-69) demolished a temple in the heart of Mathura and built a mosque on its foundations in 1661-62. In 1666 he demolished the railing of the Keshava Rai Temple at Mathura. Gokala, the Zamindar of Tilpat rose in revolt against him. Abdus-un-Nabbi was killed in a clash near village Basra. The rebellion spread to Agra. But Gokala was defeated. Tilpat was besieged by the royal forces and Gokala alongwith the members of his family was arrested by Hassan Ali Khan.² The Jats, however, rose in rebellion once again in 1686 under the leadership of Raja Ram.

The Satnami rebellion took place in 1672. Though it originated in a personal quarrel between a farmer and a soldier, it soon spread and about five thousand armed Satnamis rose in revolt and scored victories in some battles. The large scale armed intervention crushed the Satnami uprising in March 1672.³

In March 1671 a Muslim officer was sent to Ujjain to demolish Hindu temples. The Hindus of Ujjain rose in protest. They rioted and killed the officer and many of his soldiers. People rose in revolt against a Mughal official indulging in

(1) Shri Ram Sharma. Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors. P.215

(2) Jadu Nath Sarkar. Aurangzeb. (Hindi) P.115

(3) Op. Cit 2. P.115-116

wanton destruction of temples. Under the leadership of a Rajput chief they defeated the Mughal force and killed its leader.⁴

In Gujarat near Ahmedabad Kolis took possession of a mosque and prevented the offering of Friday prayers.

The destruction of temples at Mayapur and Ayodhya did not overawe the people into abject submission. Even after the destruction of these temples, people continued gathering there and these temples continued to be venerated.⁵ When a temple at Bhagwant Garh was destroyed, it was repaired by Gaj Singh Gor.⁶ In 1690 some temples which had been converted into residences were opened to public worship.⁷ There was resistance when Aurangzeb banned worship of these idols. A Sikh temple at Sirhind was converted into a mosque. However, the Imam of the Mosque was killed.⁸

The Hindu political elite, too, protested against the savagery of the fanatic policies of Aurangzeb. But owing to their own limitations, the Hindu feudal chiefs could not come to the help of the Common Hindus. However, on behalf of the Rajputs Rana Raj Singh wrote a letter to Aurangzeb and reminded him of the religious policies of his predecessors. The intolerant religious policies followed by the Emperor, he said, caused resentment in all sections of society. He told Aurangzeb of essential oneness of all mankind and pointed out to him the dangerous potentialities of his policies. He said that those who worship idols and those who bow to Him in the mosque, worship the same God.⁹

Rana Raj Singh had earlier given protection to the priests of the temples of Gordhan at Mathura when they had to flee

(4) Shri Ram Sharma. Religious policy of Mughal Emperors. P.173

(5) Op. cit. 4. P.173

(6) Op. cit 4. P.173

(7) Op. cit 4. P. 178

(8) Op. cit 4. P.176

(9) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P. 267

alongwith the idols of the gods enshrined at these temples. They were given a royal reception and the idols were enshrined at Sihar in March 1672.¹⁰

Rana Raj Singh had come to the rescue of princess Charumati of Kishangarh who was being forced to marry Aurangzeb. He married her and risked the displeasure of the Emperor.¹¹

He also wrote a letter to the Emperor protesting against his policies. This letter is a bold expression of resentment on the part of royalty against Aurangzeb's fanaticism:-

“ During Your Majesty's regime many have been alienated. Your subjects are trampled under foot and every province of your empire is impoverished. As to the soldiery they are in murmurs, the merchants complaining, the Mohemmedans discontented, the Hindus destitute..... If your majesty places any faith in these books, by distinction called divine, you will there be instructed that God is the God of all mankind and not the God of Mohammedans only. The pagans and the Muslims are equal in His presence..... To villify the religion or the customs of other men, is to set at naught the pleasure of the Almighty.”¹²

The Rajputs were partners in power with the Mughals and some of them were related to the Mughals through matrimonial alliances. The anti-Hindu shift in Aurangzeb's policy caused a lot of consternation but keeping in view the power reality, the protest did not acquire the dimensions of a popular rebellion. The non-Muslim Royalty could not channelise the grass root resentment into concerted, organised defiance. The

(10) Shri Ram Sharma. Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors P.173

(11) Gopi Nath Sharma. Mughal Mewar Sambandh. (Hindi) P.115

(12) Jadu Nath Sarkar. Aurangzeb III Part. Quoted by Dr. Trilochan Singhh. Op cit. 9 P.267

Rajputs continued working under and fighting for the Mughals.

According to Gopi Nath Sharma this letter was not written by Rana Raj Singh of Mewar in protest against the imposition of Jizya as he continued to have good relations with Aurangzeb as is evident from the fact that he went on pilgrimage to Vrindavan and Mathura and reached Udaipur on 26 May 1679. Contrary to popular tradition, the letter was not written by Raja Jaswant Singh. Mr. Sharma is of the opinion that the letter in the secret archives of the Maharana, is an abridged version of Shivaji's letter to Aurangzeb, copies of which were sent to the Rajput Kintgs.¹³

This letter in any case, does give an idea of the feeling of the Hindu Royalty against Aurangzeb's bigotry and fanaticism. The Hindu military elite, owing to its weak military position had to accept this humiliation and compromise with the Mughal Emperor and were in no position to galvanize their resentment into rebellion although the Ranas of Mewar with their long traditions of struggle against the Mughals had created a sense of pride and love of freedom among the common men as well as the ruling classes. But even the Mewar rulers had to enter into alliance with the Emperor in 1681 which ended their resistance. Later on the Ranas of Mewar fought for Aurangzeb in the South¹⁴ though they rose in revolt against him when Aurangzeb annexed Marwar on the death of Raja Jaswant Singh.¹⁵

M.P. Shrivastava is of the view that Aurangzeb did not wait for the imposition of Jizya till the death of Raja Jaswant Singh and Raja jai Singh. Even during the life time of these chiefs Aurangzeb had been taking measures to discriminate against

(13) Gopi Nath Sharma. Mewar Mughal Sambandh. Hindi. P. 116-118

(14) Gopi Nath Sharma. Mughal Mewar Sambandh (Hindi) P.96- also see Mughal Empire. Ed. R.C. Majumdar P.354-355

(15) Op. cit. 14. P.96

the Hindus but neither Jai Singh, nor Jaswant Singh raised any objections.

In fact both the Rajput Chiefs had become servile vassals of the Mughal Emperors.¹⁶

In Delhi, however, Hindus assembled in large numbers in front of the Jharokha to the river bank to express their inability to pay the Jizya and pray for the recall of the tax. Khafi Khan has described a popular demonstration against the Emperor against the imposition of Jizya:-

“ One day when he (Aurangzeb) went to public prayer, mechanics and workers of all kinds left their work and business and pressed into the way. Notwithstanding the crowd, orders were given to force the way through, but it was impossible for the Emperor to reach the mosque. At length an order was given to bring out the elephants and direct them against the mob. Many fell trodden to death under the feet of elephants and horses. For some days Hindus continued to assemble in great numbers but at length they submitted to Jizya.¹⁷

The Emperor ignored the pathetic pleas of the Hindus of Delhi and surrounding areas. But resistance to Jizya soon died out.¹⁸ The feudal Hindu elite with their limitations and the fragmented Hindu society could not resist the onslaught of a ruthless fanatic theocracy. But sporadic attempts still continued. Aurangzeb's attempt to make Marwar a part of the Mughal empire after the death of Raja Jaswant Singh evoked fierce opposition. The Emperor's insistence to collect Jizya from Mewar caused Rajputs to rise in rebellion once again.¹⁹ But ultimately the Ranas of Mewar had to submit to the Mughals.

(16) M.P. Shrivastava. Policies of Great Mughals. P.108

(17) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P.267

(18) Jadu Nath Sarkar. Aurangzeb. P. 113

(19) Op. cit 18. P. 125

The rise of Marathas which ultimately destroyed the Mughal power in the South, derived its strength from popular protest but the Rajputs fought against the Marathas on the side of Aurangzeb,²⁰ and Raja Jai Singh secured Shivaji's consent for entering into a treaty with Aurangzeb²¹ and his son was given Mansabdari and rendered service to prince Muazzam. The Marathas did put a valiant fight against the Mughals and contributed significantly to the fall of the Mughal Empire.²² Although Aurangzeb could not exploit the dissensions in the Maratha Camp, the fact remains that many Maratha Chiefs sided with him.

The reversal of the liberal policies of his predecessors, the large scale destruction of temples the reimposition of Jizya, Aurangzeb's annexation of Marwar after the death of Raja Jaswant Singh, his use of state as an instrument of converting people to Islam, created sullen discontent among all classes of Hindus.²³ During the reign of Aurangzeb Hindus had to spend their life in the darkness of ignorance.²⁴ They had to undergo public humiliation, economic deprivation and political incapacity²⁵ The Hindus felt leaderless and rudderless. The Rajput chiefs were partners in power with Aurangzeb and actively helped him in curbing rebellions. Raja Jai Singh fought against Shivaji at Purrinder. Raja Ram Singh fought against the Ahom kings of Assam. After the agreement with Aurangzeb even the Mewar Rajputs fought in Deccan. Raja of Amber fought against the Jat chief Raja Ram. Chhattersal who had served in the army of Raja Jai Singh fought against Shivaji and was given a mansab of 1000 in 1665, revolted against Aurangzeb but

(19) Op. cit 18. P. 125

(20) Op cit 18 P. 155

(21) Jadu Nath Sarkar. Aurangzeb. P. 162-63

(22) Op. cit 21. p. 267

(23) M.P. Shrivastava. Policies of great Mughals. P. 111-112

(24) Op. cit. 21 P. 319

(25) Op. cit 21 P. 319

became a mansabdar of 4,000 and served Aurangzeb in 1705.²⁶

To the Hindus then Shivaji appeared to be the lone protector of Hinduism. Though, he too had made occasional compromises, he did not give up his struggle against Aurangzeb and was able to found the Maratha Empire.

As a matter of fact, in the medieval India under Aurangzeb, the character of the polity was essentially feudal and despite the anti-Hindu stance of the state, feudal alliances transcending religious considerations were frequently made and unmade. Atrocities against the Hindus must have made the Hindu chiefs feel humiliated but considerations of preserving their own political privileges made them persist in their political affiliations. At the grass root level there were local rebellions organised by the Jats, the Satnamis, the Bundhelas, but in these cases religion was mixed with other issues and there was no clearly defined demand for religious freedom.

Despite the heroic acts of resistance on the part of feudal elite as well as the common people, the existence of a large number of Hindu vassal states, the presence of Hindu nobles like Raja Jaswant Singh and Raja Jai Singh, the Hindu society was on the whole bogged down in a quagmire of deep depression and demoralisation born out of a realisation of the almost invincible might of the Muslim conquerors who had for more than six hundred years..... invariably defeated the Hindu feudal overlords of India, subjugated and humiliated them, plundered their kingdoms, demolished and desecrated their temples and forced them to enter into dishonourable alliances.

The Hindus of the North India could not thus find any succour from the powerful Hindu chieftains who were not in any case able to come to the rescue of their harassed and beleagured bretheren in faith. In their hour of crisis, when they

(26) Raghuvir Singh. The Bundhelas. The Mughal Empire Ed. R.C. Majumdar P.380

felt that their very existence was at stake, the Pandits from Kashmir perceived their saviour in the person of Guru Tegh Bahadur who had no feudal vested interest to protect, whose piety and benevolence had become legendary and who possessed boundless compassion. In the words of Anil C. Bannerji:-

The helplessness of the Hindus from Kashmir found clear expression in Kashmiri Pandit's deputation to Guru Tegh Bahadur; in him they hoped to find as they did find, a saviour at a time when their own community could not provide leadership in resistance to Mughal persecution.²⁷

The Hindu community specially in the North India, had by then, been completely demoralised. The Sikh Gurus had, in their own way attempted a reconciliation between the Hindus and the Muslims just as Akbar had tried to build a composite culture by making the leaders of different religious communities to come together and endeavour to understand one another. But Akbar's Sullah Kul policy was reversed immediately after his death by his son Jahangir and later on by Shahjahan. It was completely reversed by Emperor Aurangzeb. The Hindu community, as A.C. Bannerji points out, was too shattered and disintegrated to make an effective protest, the duty of carrying forward the Sullah Kul tradition fell upon the shoulders of the Sikh Gurus. Two of the Sikh Gurus sacrificed their lives for the sake of ensuring respectful existence to the non-Muslims and the third, Guru Har Gobind, had to suffer imprisonment. Naturally the Gurus were looked upon by the Hindus as their protectors as the policies of the Gurus were vital to their cause.²⁸

(27) A.C. Bannerji. Inter Religious Relations during Muslim Rule in India. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Background and Supreme Sacrifice. P.91

(28) Op. cit 27. P.91

HERO OF THE PEOPLE

The early historians do not mention the visit of the Brahmins from Kashmir to Anandpur Sahib to seek the protection of Guru Tegh Bahadur against the ruthless onslaught of the Governor of Kashmir who had threatened them to either embrace Islam or accept death.

Between 1780 and 1805, ten books, wholly or partly devoted to the study of the Sikh history, were written in Persian. All of these with one exception (Sohan Lal Suri's *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*) were written either because their authors had been commissioned to write these by the East India Company or they wanted to win the patronage or the favour of the Company. These historians do talk of the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. There is, however, one exception. The author of *Haqiqat-i-Bina* talks of his natural death.¹

Ghulam Hussain is the most prominent of these historians. In his book *Siyar Al Mutakhrin*, he has presented Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom as a mere law and order problem. He presents the Guru as a man subsisting on plunder and rapine in league with a Muslim fakir Hafiz Ahmed. According to him Guru Tegh Bahadur extracted money from the Hindus whereas Hafiz Ahmed Sirhindi levied forcible exactions on the Muslims. 'The intelligencers' says Ghulam Hussain, wrote to Emperor Aurangzeb that "the two mendicants, so and so, had taken on the habit and no wonder, if their power increased, they might also sally forth in a hostile manner".

"Aurangzeb ordered the Governor of Lahore to banish Hafiz Sirhindi beyond river Attock and Peshawar and imprison Guru Tegh Bahadur. In a subsequent order he directed the Governor to execute the Guru and cut the body into pieces and hang these on different sides of the city. This was done according to the order"²

(1) For details see J.S. Grewal. *Persian Chroniclers of Guru Tegh Bahadur*.

(2) *Panjab Past and Present*. April 1975. P. IX-X

The story narrated by Ghulam Hussain is historically wrong as has been proved by Ganda Singh. According to Ganda Singh, Hafiz Ahmed died in 1643 at Mecca. He had been banished by Shah Jahan.³ Guru Tegh Bahadur became the ninth Guru in 1664, twenty one years after the death of Hafiz Ahmed. Furthermore the extortion theory is also not correct because the Guru never collected tithes himself. Ghulam Hussain speaks of multitudes moving with the Guru. The Guru did attract large crowds because he gave them spiritual solace.⁴ Had he indulged in plunder and rapine, he could never have become an object of adoration and worship. Ghulam Hussain himself states that 'Companions of Guru Tegh Bahadur moved about like mendicants. The wearing of swords was not customary with them'⁵ It is obvious that the unarmed admirers and followers of the Guru could have posed no threat to the Emperor.

Ghulam Hussain's version of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom continued to distort the view point of early western historians. In the introduction to his translation of the Adi Granth Dr. Earnest Trumpp speaks of Guru Tegh Bahadur as a haughty extortionist:-

"The Guru appears by no means a humble spirited instructor but riding at the head of well armed disciples, who if not willingly provided, levied contributions on the Zamindars."⁶

Basing himself on the Sakhis rendered into English by Sardar Attar Singh (Travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh Indian Public Opinion Press Lahore, Jan. 1876) he points to the violent aspect of the personality of the Guru

(3) J.S.Grewal. Persian Chroniclers of Guru Tegh Bahadur

(4) Dr. Fauja Singh Guru Tegh Bahadur P.84

(5) Panjab Past and Present. April 75. P.V.

(6) Dr. Earnest Trumpp. Introduction to Adi Granth P. IXXX IX

and states that the Guru was taken prisoner on account of his predatory proceedings, and executed as a rebel against the government⁷

Early writers like Cunningham followed Ghulam Hussain and have attributed to the Guru's sovereign aspirations. According to Cunningham his own (Guru Tegh Bahadur's) example powerfully aided in making the followers of Nanak martial as well as a devotional people. Cunningham also mentions the fact that the Guru allowed himself to be called as Sacha Padeshah or as veritable king;⁸ which of course did not exactly signify temporal aspirations but could be interpreted as such:-

"But the expression could be adopted to any circumstances and its mystic application seems to have perplexed the minds of the Mughal princes while it illustrates the assertion of an intelligent Mohammedan writer that Tegh Bahadur being at the head of many thousand men aspired to sovereign power."⁹

Mohd. Latif has laid emphasis on the military aspect of the Sikh movement led by Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Guru, he says, built a fort at Kiratpur and indulged in plunder in the region between Sutlej and Hansi and was a free booter¹⁰.

These allegations, of course, are untrue. The Guru did not have one thousand men at his command nor did he build a fort at Kiratpur. The town of Kiratpur was under Dhir Mal's sons. Had the Guru indulged in plunder he would not have become a charismatic figure, commanding the loyalty of multitudes of disciples. If the Guru had been devastating the region between Hansi and Sutlej, he would never have struck roots in the area.¹¹

(7) Dr. Earnest Trumpp *Adi Granth*, Introduction. P. LXXXVIII

(8) Cunningham. *History of the Sikhs*. P.59

(9) *Op. cit* 8. P. 59

(10) Mohd. Latif. *History of Panjab*. P.259

(11) Hari Ram Gupta. *History of Sikhs*. P. 208

Ganesh Das Wadhera is the only Persian Chronicler who has stated (Chahar Bagh-i-Punjab) that the arrest of Guru Tegh Bahadur was affected owing to the excessive zeal of Aurangzeb who was fond of insisting on religious men to show miracles to prove their divinity or to face death. According to Wadhera:-

'His zeal for religion was such that he used to call holy men to his presence and demand miracles from them. Some of the holy men like Shah Daula of Gujarat, Shah Sadur-ud-Din of Qassur and Shah Hussain Durr escaped from the clutches of the Emperor. Others, however, like Sarmad and Qalandar submitted to their fate, to become martyrs in the cause of their faith.¹²'

Ganesh Das Wadhera's assessment of the character of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the character of Aurangzeb is authentic. Aurangzeb was universally acknowledged as a bigot. Guru Tegh Bahadur was a man of sterling integrity who chose to oppose the tyranny of a theocratic system and was sentenced to death for his defiance of the imperial authority.

The real reason for the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur was the fact that he came to the rescue of the harassed Brahmins from Kashmir. The Guru was executed because he had frustrated the imperial design of converting Hindus to Islam. While dealing with the Guru, Aurangzeb was not face to face with a political foe like Shivaji who had challenged his authority and conquered territories or chhatarsal or Jat leader Gokula who took to arms against the Emperor. The Guru had fought no battles. He did not move at the head of hordes of men. The very fact that at the time of his arrest no resistance was offered and no skirmishes took place points to the non-military nature of the Sikh movement led by him.

The Guru was not executed by Aurangzeb because his

(12) J.S. Grewal. Persian Chroniclers of Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.63

followers had begun to call him Sacha Padeshah as has been pointed out by Irvine*. The Western scholars have overlooked the spiritual connotation of the term. As a matter of fact this term had been in use since the days of the second Guru. In the Satta Balwand di Var in the Adi Granth, Guru Angad is addressed as Sache Pateshah. Guru Arjan Dev used it to describe God Himself when he said:-

Lord my beloved is the true king¹³

He is the king of kings.

The term was not used to spite the Mughal kings. It had spiritual connotations and need be interpreted as such. It does not lend itself to political and temporal interpretation. The author of Dabistan-E-Mazahib has recorded that the term was in vogue among the disciples of Guru Hargobind. Pincott's observation that the Guru spent his life in violent antagonism to the Muslim rulers of the country is not supported by facts.¹⁴ Trumpp's assertion that the Guru appears by no means a humble spirited person¹⁵ is also not supported by any evidence direct or indirect. His attitude towards his rivals speaks volumes for his humility. His poems about the transcendence of material possessions are not the outpourings of an arrogant heart. The spirit of sublime submission to the will of God is the keynote of his poetry. While focussing on the regal bearings of the Sikh Gurus the western scholars tend to overlook the spiritual aspect of the Sikh movement and its opposition to coercion and cruelty and injustice. The Sikh Gurus donned the sword of Miri with a view to fight against injustice but the inspiration for this struggle was essentially a projection of their spiritually oriented value system and not a result of their aspiration to political power.

(13) Sajjan Sacha Padeshah. Sir Shehan de Shah. A.G. 1094

* Also see Ganda Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur Panjab Past and Present. April 1975. P.IV

(14) Pincott. History of Shah Alam Quoted by A.S. Bagha. Pal Prasanavli P.40

(15) Dr. Earnest Trumpp. Introduction to Adi Granth. Also see. Gurdeep Kaur, Political Ideas of Sikh Gurus. P.42-43,49

In a theocracy the political and religious aspects of the policy are inseparably mixed up. Guru Tegh Bahadur was heading a religious movement. The real reason for the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur was religious and not political, unless one is talking of political fall out of his martyrdom.

There is no denying the fact that the Guru was immensely popular. He did attract large crowds wherever he went. Out of eleven years of his spiritual reign he spent almost eight years in travelling through Bengal, Bihar, Assam Orissa, Utter Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. He visited almost all the places earlier visited by Guru Nanak to propagate the message of Sikhism. During his visits to Kurukshetra, Triveni, Banaras Malda, Dhubri, Jagan Nath Puri, he came across and exchanged views with Brahmins, Vaishnav saints, Sufis, and Tantriks who had been upset by Aurangzeb's increasingly oppressive measures. They perceived the activities of the Guru as an extension of the propagation of their own religion and admired him and despite the Sikh opposition to Hindu ritualism, there was no orthodox Brahmin hostility to the Guru. The Guru came to be admired by them. They thought of him as their saviour.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's popularity was not owing to the fact that he maintained an open kitchen. He was popular because he had become a source of spiritual solace for the suffering people and they saw in him their protector against tyranny. He was all compassion for the suffering humanity and people flocked to him in large numbers. Regarding his tours through Malwa, Hari Ram Gupta says:-

“As the Guru was meeting his disciples after eight or nine years, many men followed him during his tours to listen to his sermons and to get his benedictions. To serve the congregation the residents of the villages voluntarily collected food stuffs, milk and clarified butter for Guru's langar. Rain was scarce. It was almost a desert. The poor and the ignorant but hardy and tough people were cowed down by Muslim officials,

particularly at the time when Emperor was present in Punjab¹⁶.

It was Guru Tegh Bahadur's identification with the people, his love and compassion for them, which created the popular perception of the Guru as a hero who could come to the rescue of the people. This is why the Pandits felt that he alone could help them and protect them against the powerful government of Aurangzeb.

(16) Hari Ram Gupta. Tegh Bahadur. A Biographical Study. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Background and Supreme Sacrifice. P.16

PROTECTOR OF THE PERSECUTED

BRAHMINS FROM KASHMIR

In his eagerness to convert India the land of 'infidels,' into the land of the faithful, Aurangzeb thought of converting Brahmins to Islam because the Brahmins formed the core of the Hindu religious tradition and sustained the Hindu religion socially and theologically. The Hindu centres of pilgrimage were the citadels of Hinduism. Aurangzeb focussed his attention specially on Kashmir, Kurukshetra, Benaras and Haridwar and ordered that the Brahmins there should be speedily brought into the fold of Islam. S.M. Latif in his History of Punjab bears testimony to this fact when he says:-

Thus the Emperor had in those days thrown hundreds of Brahmins into jail, in the hope, that if they first embraced the religion of the Prophet the rest of the Hindus would readily follow their example.¹

Iftikhar Khan took over as the Governor of Kashmir in 1671 and ruled over the state till 1675. He carried out the fanatical policies of Aurangzeb with great zeal. Aurangzeb's motives in persecuting the Brahmins were obvious. The Brahmins both preserved and propagated the Hindu religious tradition and their wholesale conversion to Islam would have definitely helped in bringing the rest of the Hindus into the fold of Islam. The Brahmins of Kashmir were renowned for their learning and orthodoxy. The valley of Kashmir, surrounded as it was by the Muslim lands, could be easily assimilated with the rest of the Muslim India across the Attock river, the North western provinces, Afghansitan and Persia.

Iftikhar Khan's persecution of the helpless Brahmins, forced them to seek refuge with the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Tegh Bahadur, who alone, they thought, could come to their

(1) S.M.Latif. History of Panjab P.260

rescue. P.N. Kaul Bamzai has depicted the predicament of the Brahmins from Kashmir:

Iftikhar Khan, a Governor of Aurangzeb, was using force to convert the Pundits in Kashmir to Islam. Some pious men among the Pundits then met and decided to go to Amarnath and invoke the mercy of Shiva there for delivering them from the tyrannies of the bigot. At the Amar Nath cave one of the Pundits, in a dream saw Lord Shiva who told him to go to Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs in the Punjab and ask for help to save the Hindu religion. He spoke to his companions about the revelation. About five hundred Pundits proceeded to Anandpur where Guru Tegh Bahadur was living.²

Kirpa Ram Datt of Mattan, was the leader of these Brahmins. He was the Sanskrit teacher of Gobind Rai and was naturally aware of the spiritual strength, altruism and compassion of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He knew that the Guru's inviolable integrity and spirit of self-sacrifice and his indomitable courage alone could take them out of their predicament. The feudal Hindu Chiefs with their vested interests and subordinate position and feudal allegiance to the Mughal Emperor could not do much for the persecuted Brahmins. The Guru was the only hope for them. So they decided to go to Anandpur and seek refuge with the Guru. During the forty nine years of Aurangzeb's reign, Kashmir was administered by fourteen Governors. Iftikhar Khan was the most fanatic and bigoted of these. The Sikh tradition speaks of the atrocities against the Brahmins of Kashmir and the visit of their deputation under the leadership of Kirpa Ram to Anandpur. Seva Singh the author of Shahid Bilas has stated:

"Sorrow stricken Brahmins came to Anandpur and said,
"Protect us O Lord, the son of Guru Hargobind. Hear,

(2) P.N.K.Bamzai. A History of Kashmir. Metropolitan Book Co. (1973) P.544

our pathetic pleas, Guru Tegh Bahadur-protector of the poor and the cows, you are the Prophet of the Almighty in the Kalyuga. We have none to go to for help. Our condition is most pitiable. Protect us the way Lord Krishna protected Dropdi. We have gone from pillar to post. You are the Lord Krishna of the present age. We have no other hope. We seek refuge at thy feet, O Lord''³

Gian Singh, in Twarikh Guru Khalsa has stated that at that time grief stricken, and dismayed Brahmins and Khatri came to Guru Tegh Bahadur and narrated their tales of woes, saying that the Hindu tradition was in the danger of being completely annihilated. Unheard atrocities were being committed against the Hindus. The Guru was deeply affected on hearing the tales of woes of the hapless Hindus.

Mohd. Latif accepts the authenticity of the Sikh tradition and says that 'his (Aurangzeb's) attachment to Mohammedanism seems to have been sincere but his bigotry and intolerance towards Hindus revived religious animosities between various classes of population''⁴

There is no denying the fact that the Brahmins looked down upon those Hindus who had embraced Islam* and their conversion would have naturally decreased the embarrassment of the new converts but this consideration could not be the sole motivation for Aurangzeb's anti-Brahmanical zeal. The more plausible reason for the severe and persistent persecution on the part of the Emperor was the fact that the Brahmins were the exponents of Hindu religion, scriptures, rites and

(3) Shahid Bilas. by poet Seva Singh. Ed. Garja Singh Giani. Panjabi Sahit Academy. Dec. 1961. P.57-60

Giani Gian Singh. Twarikh Guru Khalsa. Part I. 1891 Sialkot p. 264-82

(4) Mohd. Latif. History of Punjab. P.179

* Dr. Trilochan Singh's statement (Page 294) in his scholarly treatise (Guru Tegh Bahadur, Prophet and Martyr) that middle class Hindus approached the Emperor that if he wished to build a Dar-ul-Islam he should convert the Brahmins first does not appear to be very plausible.

ceremonies. They were the leaders of the Hindu social and spiritual system and their conversion to Islam would surely help in furthering the proselytising ambitions of the Emperor.

According to Macauliffe, the experiment of wholesale conversion was first tried in Kashmir. The Kashmiri Pandits were well known for their scholarship and converting them to Islam would encourage other Hindus to embrace Islam. Surrounded as they were with Muslim lands, they could be threatened with war and complete annihilation. The peaceful Kashmiris could not be expected to resist the Muslim military might. The Emperor also felt that he might succeed in tempting the Brahmins from Kashmir into accepting Islam by promises of money and government appointments.^{4A}

Iftikhar Khan vigorously pursued the instructions of the Emperor and relentlessly and ruthlessly attempted to convert the Pundits with the help of force. Those who refused to accept Islam were put to sword. The Sikh tradition tells us about the piling of sacred threads of the Brahmins who had been converted or killed. Koer Singh Kalal, the author of *Gurbilas Patshahi Das*, says that there was piled up a heap of a maund and quarter of janeus (sacred threads) of the Hindus who had embraced Islam under the command of Iftikhar Khan.⁵ Many of the Brahmins who did not accept Islam under the threat of death managed to escape from Kashmir and under the guidance of Kirpa Ram, they reached the Darbar of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

According to Bhatt Vahi Talaunda Pargana Jind, Kirpa Ram was accompanied by sixteen Brahmins from Kashmir but according to Bamzai, Kirpa Ram headed a delegation of five hundred Brahmins. These Brahmins did not hail from Kashmir only but belonged to different centres of Hindu pilgrimage like Kurukshetra, Haridwar and Banaras. There were many Brahmins

(4A) Macauliffe. *The Sikh Religion*. Vol. IV. P.369

(5) Koer Singh Kalal. *Gurbilas Patshahi Das*. Chapter IV

in prison in Delhi. According to a legend a saintly soul amongst them dreamt that Guru Tegh Bahadur alone could save the Hindu Dharma from total destruction. Letters were written to the leaders of Brahmins at Kurukshetra and Haridwar asking them to go to Anand Pur Sahib and seek refuge at the feet of Guru Tegh Bahadur⁶. The Brahmins of all the sacred centres of Hinduism selected as their leader a Kashmiri scholar Kirpa Ram of Mattan. He was a Saraswati Brahmin from Mattan, situated at a distance of forty miles from Srinagar. He was head of the Sanskrit Institutions in Kashmir⁷. All the Brahmins pledged to submit to the wishes of the Guru. The reason for their selecting Kirpa Ram as their leader was the fact that apart from his being a great scholar he had resided at the Darbar of the Guru for a long time and was thus fully aware of the teachings of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He knew fully well that the Guru was completely free of the allurements of life. He had no vested interests. As a man he had transcended egoistic attachments and had freed himself of fear. He alone could take a bold stand against the tyranny of the Emperor and come to the rescue of the beleagured Brahmins.⁸ Such was his admiration for the Sikh traditions, and such was his reverence for the Gurus that he took baptism when Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa and died a martyr in the battle of Chamkaur⁹.

The Brahmins left Kashmir and after passing through Amritsar, they reached Anandpur, the abode of Bliss on the 25th May 1675.¹⁰

The Sikh poets have graphically narrated the pathetic condition of the Brahmins who made earnest entreaties to Guru Tegh Bahadur and asked him to help them as he was the very

(6) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur, Prophet and Martyr. P.295

(7) Op cit. 6 P. 295

(8) Fauja Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.91

(9) Harbans Singh, Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.95

(10) Surrinder Singh Johar, Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.181

incarnation of compassion. The author of Shahid Bilas has stated:-

'We suffer great atrocities Master, sacred threads are forcibly taken off our persons. cows are killed. Janeus (sacred threads) a maund and a quarter in weight are snapped in a single day.¹¹

Aurangzeb did adopt a policy of rank discrimination against the non-believers and believed in forcibly converting the Hindus. Giani Gian Singh, in his account of Guru Tegh Bahadur, written in 1891, has stated that 'taking note of the intentions of the Emperor, his unjust and cruel subalterns let loose a reign of terror and forced the Hindus to choose between death and Islam. It was during his reign that many tribes like Khakhe, Bhambe, Kakkezai, Ranghar, Jats, Rajputs Arain, Kambo, Gakhar, Bhatti etc embraced Islam. In those times, people would say that Aurangzeb would take his dinner only after snapping sacred threads weighing one and a quarter maund. This, however, is incorrect. Sacred threads, numbering fifty lakhs, weigh one and a quarter maunds. It is impossible that Aurangzeb could have converted so many Hindus daily.'

The Guru was deeply moved on listening to the stories told by the Brahmins and said that their problems could be solved only if some man of truthfulness and integrity offers himself for sacrifice to save the faith of the Hindus. Every one was stunned into silence. Only Gobind Singh who was at that time just nine years old said, 'Who else can be more truthful and sublime than you! You alone can protect the Hindu religion. You alone are that great soul sublime.' Guru Tegh Bahadur was delighted to hear the brave words of his son. He said to the Pandits, 'Go and tell the Emperor that all of you shall embrace Islam, if he is able to make Guru Tegh Bahadur embrace Islam'¹²

(11) Koer Singh, Gurbilas Patshahi Das. Punjab University. P.48 quoted by Harbans Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.97

(12) Gian Singh Twarikh Guru Khalsa. Sialkot. (1891) P.264-282

Giani Gian Singh tells us that the Brahmins were hesitant to make this proposal to the Emperor but were encouraged to do so by the opponents of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Seva Singh, the author of *Shahid Bilas* also speaks of Guru Tegh Bahadur's perception that the only way to stem the tide of oppression was some great man's sacrifice as the moral force emanating from such a moral act alone could bring solace to the suffering people:

Then the Guru resolved

Without offering sacrifice, the world's sufferings would not be mitigated.¹³

Bamzai's treatment of the entire episode is similar to that of the Sikh scholars:-

They told him about the atrocities committed on them by Aurangzeb's Governor Iftikhar Khan. The Guru was deeply touched on hearing the details and was in a sorry and pensive mood. At that time his son Gobind Singh who was only nine years old and was playing outside, came to him. He saw a crowd of Pundits sitting there in distress and his father mute as a fish. He asked his father why he looked pensive. Guru Tegh Bahadur pointing towards the Pundits, told his son mournfully that the Hindus were being forced to renounce their religion and that he thought that they could be protected if some holy man offered himself to be sacrificed for them. Guru Gobind Singh with folded hands said to him. "who else is a holier man, more fit for being sacrificed, than yourself, for saving the Hindu religion." Guru Tegh Bahadur replied, "I have absolutely no hesitation in giving my head but I am grieving that you are still a child who will take care of you after me?" Guru Gobind Singh replied "Almighty will take care of me." Guru Tegh Bahadur was pleased to hear the courageous

(13) *Tab satguru im man therai, bin sir diya Jagat dukh paye Seva Singh - Shahid Bilas. P.57-60*

answer from his worthy son and then advised the Brahmins to go to Aurangzeb and tell him that they, with all the Brahmins of Kashmir, were quite ready to embrace Islam if Tegh Bahadur who was the chief Guru, would first be converted¹⁴."

The Brahmins went to Zalim Khan, the Governor of Lahore and informed him of the Guru's resolve. The Governor of Kashmir was asked not to indulge in forcible proselytising as it was hoped that the objective of converting people to Islam could be achieved without the application of force.

(14) P.N.K. Bamzai. A History of Kashmir. P.555

ROAD TO MARTYRDOM FROM ANAND PUR TO DELHI

A congregation was held at Anandpur on July 8, 1675 and Guru Gobind Singh was annointed the tenth Guru of the Sikhs by Guru Tegh Bahadur. Baba Gurditta who was a descendant of Bhai Gurdas applied the Tilak to the Guru. Guru Tegh Bahadur exhorted the Sikhs to acknowledge Guru Gobind Singh as their Guru and told them that the time for his departure for Delhi had come.¹

Before his departure for Delhi the Guru made all possible arrangements. His perception of the transience of life and his state of mind which admitted of no attachement to the possessions and pleasures of the world, his equanimity which made it possible for him to pass from the state of being to that of non-being in a painless manner, had completely eliminated the fear of death. The principle was dearer to him than life. While embarking on his march to martyrdom he was absolutely sure of his impending departure from this world of ephemeral phenomena. His allegiance was to the eternal principles which give a divine dimension of sublimity to the mundane, human existence. He told his people that 'the son of God must sacrifice himself for the people. He must pour life into the dead bones of the fallen people.'² He had heard the call of his conscience and was ready to come to the rescue of the harassed Hindus of India.

The devotees of the Guru were in a sad mood and bade him a tearful farewell on eleventh July 1675. The Guru consoled his Sikhs and told them that the tenth Guru would look after them well. He further told them that the new Guru would be a great warrior and founder of a distinct panth.³

(1) Harbans Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.97

(2) S.S. Johar. Guru Tegh Bahadur- A biography P.186

(3) Satbir Singh. Kino Bado Kalu Mahe Saka. P.64

Guru Tegh Bahadur's decision to come to the rescue of the Hindus was a moral decision. It was the outcome of his moral compulsion to stand against injustice and tyranny. Whether he reached Agra and presented himself for arrest or was arrested near Ropar is immaterial because his decision to court martyrdom was a voluntary decision. It was actuated by the basic instinct of a martyr to perform the noble act knowing fully well that such an act will invite physical extinction.

The Guru was a great leader of men and inspired complete faith in his disciples and enjoyed their absolute allegiance and obedience. At the time of his departure from Anandpur, he was accompanied by four of his most devoted disciples who were, willing to court death alongwith their Master. Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Gurditta, Bhai Dayal Das, and Bhai Sati Das were his trusted disciples and confidants. Hari Ram Gupta is of the opinion that Bhai Jaita also accompanied him. Bhai Jaita was the personal attendant of the Guru.⁴ Giani Gian Singh the author of *Panth Prakash* also speaks of five disciples of the Guru who accompanied him to Delhi.⁵ These disciples of the Guru were motivated by the noblest feelings. Like their Guru they too believed, in the universality of human nobility which expresses itself through the human desire for the welfare of entire mankind. They were not fanatics out to oppose fanaticism. The Guru and his disciples were enlightened souls. Even though the Guru was being persecuted by a Muslim fanatic and bigot, he had friends among the Muslims who shared his perception of the brotherhood of mankind and the fatherhood of God. Fanaticism poisons and pollutes the religious impulse, distorts human perception and sullies the beauty of human emotions and relations. Guru Tegh Bahadur's host at Saifabad, Saif-ud-Din, despite being a Muslim, sympathised with the Guru and was his host. When the officers

(4) Hari Ram Gupta. Guru Tegh Bahadur. A Biographical sketch. P.18. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Background and Supreme Sacrifice. Ed. G.S. Talib.

(5) Giani Gian Singh. *Panth Prakash*. VI Edition. 1923. Amritsar P.149-151

of the Emperor came to Saifabad and enquired from the Nawab the whereabouts of the Guru, he secretly deputed his men to closely guard the Guru and even sacrifice their lives to prevent the Guru's arrest from his house so that he might not go down in history as a traitor and an informer.⁶ At Samana the Guru stayed with Mohammad Baksh who offered to the Guru innumerable gifts and a good deal of money which the Guru distributed among the poor.⁷ The Guru and his disciples were courting martyrdom not for the sake of their own faith or that of the faith of Hindus or in opposition to Islam. They wanted to assert the life sustaining supremacy of the eternal brotherhood of man. They were to defend Dharma in the context of highest spiritual values of the Indian tradition.

From Ropar the Guru and his disciples were taken to Sirhind where they were kept for a pretty long period and put to lot of hardships.⁸ The faujdar of Sirhind Dilawar Khan ordered Guru Tegh Bahadur to be detained at Bassi Pathanan and reported the news to the Emperor. For over three months he was kept in jail and given the harshest possible treatment. His disciples were also subjected to torture.⁹ According to Fauja Singh the total period of detention at Malikpur Ranghran and Sirhind was about four months. He was escorted under heavy guard to Delhi where he arrived on 4th November 1675.¹⁰ At Delhi too, he was treated very harshly and detained in a narrow cell and his disciples were subjected to the most brutal torture.

Regarding the motivation of Aurangzeb in meting out such harsh treatment to the Guru and his disciples, Fauja Singh has raised very relevant questions. The Guru was not a rebel. He had no political aspirations. He had simply promised to help the harassed Hindus. Earlier of course, he had toured Malwa

(6) Trilochan Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr*. P.308

(7) *Ibid.* Page. 308

(8) Fauja Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. P.93.

(9) Harbans Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. P.99

(10) *Op. cit* 9. P.99

and Bangar Desh and carried to the people the message of fearlessness. Prior to that he had toured Utter Pradesh and East India and had become immensely popular among the Hindus who perceived in him their saviour. Ghulam Hussain's account of Guru Tegh Bahadur has been proved to be wrong in its details by Ganda Singh, but his reference to the growing power of Guru Tegh Bahadur and his ever increasing popularity is an expression of the Imperial apprehensions. The Emperor had crushed the Jat rebellion in 1669 and the Satnami rebellion in 1672.¹¹ He wanted to nip another revolt in Punjab and Bangar Desh, in the bud. Furthermore the Guru was, with his immense chrismatic appeal, a sure impediment to his policy of converting the non-believers into Muslims. The Emperor's barbarity was actuated by political as well as religious considerations. He had mixed up religion with politics. Even ethical opposition to his policies was bound to have a political fall out.

There is a controversy regarding the place where the Guru and his disciples were arrested. Koer Singh Kalal and Sukha Singh, in their works both of which are titled *Guru Bilas Patshahi 10*, mention Delhi as his place of arrest. Gian Singh Twarikh Guru Khalsa and Santokah Singh, *Guru Pratap Surya Granth* think that the Guru was arrested at Agra.

The Governor of Lahore had informed Aurangzeb, who was then at Hassan Abdal, supervising anti-insurgency operations and he issued orders for the arrest of the Guru. The common belief for a long time had been that the Guru was arrested at Agra. Trilochan Singh, the author of *Guru Tegh Bahadur; Prophet and Martyr*, subscribes to this view. According to him the Guru went to Samana from Saifabad and from there he went to Agra and camped in a garden out-side the city. The Guru was arrested at Agra and from there he was taken to Delhi. Trilochan Singh has accepted the version of Giani Gian Singh

(11) J.N. Chaudhry. Aurangzeb from The Mughal Empire. Ed. R. C Majumdar. P.237

(Twarikh Guru Khalsa) But in the light of the entries in the Bhat vahis, the modern writers on the Guru, have come to the conclusion that the Guru was arrested at village Malik pur Ranghran near Ropar. The entry in Bhatt Vahi Multani Sindhi as recorded by Gajra Singh reads:-

“Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru...was taken into custody by Nur Muhammad Khan Mirza, of Ropar Police post, on Savan Pravishte 12 1732 BK at Malikpur Ranghran pargana Ghanaula, and sent to Sirhind. Alongwith him were arrested Dewan Mati Das and Sati Das, sons of Hira Nand Chhiber and Dayal Das son of Mai Das. They were kept in custody at Bassi Pathanan for four months. The pitiless captors imposed much atrocity on Guru. The Guru abided by God's will.”¹²

(12) Quoted by Harbans Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.98

ENCOUNTER WITH THE EMPEROR

The Falsity of Warring sects

RAH DOWAI IK JANAI SOI SIJHASI

He who knows that two paths to be one, will alone find fulfillment

The evil slanderer and caviller must burn in hell-fire

The whole universe is Divine in essence

Merge yourself in Truth.

Guru Nanak

A.G. P.142

RAH DOWAI KHASAM EKO JAN

Know the Lord to be One, even though the paths be twain
Through God's word learn His commandment;

Give equal place in thy heart to all human forms and castes

Says Nanak, only the One is worthy of worship.

Guru Nanak

A.G.P. 223

The Guru and his disciples were brought to Delhi on 4 November 1675.¹ He had been brought to Delhi in an iron cage. According to Dr. Trilochan Singh, the Guru and his disciples were brought to Delhi from Agra and the Guru was kept under house arrest as the Emperor hoped that he would be able to convince the Guru of the desirability of accepting Islam. Basing himself on Surya Prakash by Mahakavi Santokh Singh, Dr Trilochan Singh says that the Emperor instructed his officers to be strictly vigilant. They should, however, arrange for a comfortable stay for the Guru and allow special visitors to meet him.' The officers who escorted him from Agra to Delhi were very courteous to him.²

The Sikh tradition tells us of detailed discussion between the Guru and the Emperor. Giani Gian Singh the author of Twarikh Guru Khalsa writes:-

'The Kotwal sent the Guru to Delhi. At that time Bhai Gurditta, the great grand son of Baba Buddha, Bhai Uda, Bhai Dayala, Bhai Jaita, Dewan Mati Ram-these five disciples were with him. At first the Emperor treated them very well and gently said to the Guru,' You are the successor of Guru Nanak who did not discriminate between religions. You too must not be discriminating between different religions. Men of God and saintly persons are not attached to any religion. They work for the welfare of entire mankind. If you accept my humble request and embrace Islam all those Hindus who are now being coerced into embracing Islam shall be spared unnecessary torture. Where there is only one religion there will be no quarrels and conflicts. You will be the highest religious authority in the empire and all your

(1) Harbans Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.99

(2) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P.309

followers shall be placed in positions of high status and dignity.'

The Emperor held out many temptations and threats but when he found that the Guru would not budge from his position he ordered that the Guru be imprisoned in the mansion (haveli) which now forms Gurdwara Sis Ganj.

The Guru was brought to the court after eight days, once again. He was, once again, asked to embrace Islam. He told the Emperor:-

"If God wished that there should be only one religion, Islam, no body would be born a non-Muslim. If he wanted that only Hinduism should exist then in that case only Hindus would be there. This is not the case. You are violating the orders of the Almighty and as a consequence you shall rot in the Hell. You punish those who disobey you. You shall surely be punished by God. Can you ask your eyes to do the job of your ears, or ask your nose to perform the work of your mouth? If you can do that, convert the Hindus to Islam. Why should we renounce the divine path and accept man made religion and pave our way to Hell"

These words of the Guru enraged the Emperor and he offered to the Guru the choice between embracing Islam and showing miracles to prove his divinity. In case the Guru failed to show miracles, he would be beheaded. In the words of Giani Gian Singh the Guru replied:-

"To show miracles is to defy God. To accept Islam is to lose one's own faith. I shall offer my head. The body is mortal and must perish one day."³

Munshi Sant Singh who wrote his account of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1865 (in Urdu) also speaks of the presence of Aurangzeb at Delhi:.

(3) Giani Gian Singh. Twarikh Gurukhalsa. First part. Sialkot 1891 AD. P.264-82. Reproduced in Punjab Past and Present 1975. P.177-191

The Emperor, at that time, was eager to call the Guru to Delhi. He had made up his mind that the Hindu religion should become extinct in the Mughal Empire and the Hindus should be converted to Islam enmasse. With this purpose in view he issued cruel orders for the Hindus of India specially for the citizens of Kashmir. The Brahmins of Kashmir prayed for help to Guru Tegh Bahadur. He thought, in case the Guru accepts Islam, it would facilitate the acceptance of Islam on the part of the people of India . . . Of his own free will the Guru appeared at Agra to court arrest and from there he reached Delhi. . .

The king said, 'Show us a miracle or enter the fold of Islam'. The Guru flatly refused. The king was enraged and he ordered that the Guru be imprisoned in a haveli (which was haunted by a dangerous ghost) in the heart of the city and which served as a prison. So much so that he put him in an iron cage."⁴

According to S.M. Latif, the Emperor had many religious disputations with the Guru and asked him to show miracles if he was a Guru or to embrace Islam.⁵

The author of *Sikhan di Bhagat Mal* written between 1810-14 also tells us about the presence of the Emperor at Delhi. According to him the Guru told the Emperor 'I have come to you. Please release all the Brahmins'. The Guru got all the Brahmins released. When asked why he had named himself, Tegh Bahadur, the Guru replied; 'Tegh Bahadur has been born. He shall show such feats of valour as will protect the cow and the Brahmin and relieve the sufferings of the Brahmins. There shall be chaos in your kingdom'.

The author of the *Bhagat Mal* tells us that the Emperor was enraged and asked the Guru to show a miracle but the

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- (4) Bian Khandane Kramat Nishanian Bedian. May 1865. Urdu Manuscript reproduced in Punjab Past and Present. April 1975. P.170-71
- (5) S.M. Latif. History of Punjab P.260

Guru refused to show any miracle and said to the Emperor 'Miracle is the head of the lovers. Place the sword on my neck'' The Emperor was enraged at these words and ordered the execution of the Guru.^{5A}

Rai Bahadur Kanahya Lal, in his account of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom also speaks of a meeting between the Emperor and the Guru. He, however, attributes the martyrdom of the Guru to the machinations of his rival, Ram Rai, and the absence of Raja Ram Singh. His account (*Ziker-e-Guru Tegh Bahadur*) tells us about two visits of the Guru to Delhi and his earlier release on intercession by Raja Ram Singh.⁶ He says that on that occasion the Guru was released on the condition that he would proceed on pilgrimage to East and stop the construction of the fort at Kiratpur. Rai Bahadur Kanahya Lal speaks of the Guru's second visit to Delhi. The Guru was warmly welcomed by his disciples who flocked to him in large numbers and made offerings in cash and costly gifts. Ram Rai, we are told, approached the Emperor and speaking about the immense popularity of the Guru tried to create apprehensions in Aurangzeb's mind. The Guru was asked to appear in the court and show miracles. The Emperor apprehended an uprising in the capital in case he ordered the execution of the Guru but he was reassured by Ram Rai that the disciples of the Guru would not be able to rise in revolt. When the Guru said that he preferred to die than to reveal the divine secrets, the Emperor ordered his execution.⁷

Mahakavi Santokh Singh, the author of 'Guru Pratap Surya Granth' tells us that the Guru was offered three choices. The Emperor told the Guru that he should either embrace Islam or

(5a) Bhai Mani Singh. *Sikhan di Bhagat Mal*. Quoted by Dr. Trilochan Singh. (Guru Tegh Bahadur, prophet and Martyr. P.312

(6) Rai Bahadur Kanahya Lal. *Zikre Guru Tegh Bahadur*. Punjab Past and Present. April 1975. P.173-74

(7) Op. cit. 6. P.171-75

show miracles. If none of the alternatives was acceptable to him, he would have to face death.

There are three alternatives. Make up your mind. Recite the Kalma and accept Shariat. Enjoy all the pleasures of the world. If you are obstinate enough not to accept this offer, show miracles to prove your divinity. If you do not accept both these offers, be ready to lose your life."⁸

Despite the definite circumstantial evidence produced by Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar regarding the absence of Aurangzeb from Delhi from 7th April 1674 to 27th March 1676⁹ the legend has persisted that the Guru had long debating sessions with the Emperor before the Emperor issued his final orders for the execution of the Guru. A majority of the writers who wrote books and articles on the eve of the Tri-centenary celebrations of the martyrdom of the Guru have accepted the Sikh tradition in this regard. In his defence of the point of view upheld by the Sikh tradition Dr. Trilochan Singh, by highlighting the circumstantial evidence implied in a story narrated about the daughter of Qazi Abdul Wahhab Khan who had read the fatwa for the execution of the Guru, has shown that the Emperor was present at Delhi at that time. He has also quoted S.M. Latif who has contradicted the dates given by the Maasir-i-Alamgiri. He is also of the view that Guru Gobind singh's reference to Emperor's insistence that the Guru should show miracles, is

(8) Santokh Singh. Guru Pratap Surya Granth.

(9) Jadu Nath Sarkar has translated the relevant passage from Maasir-i-Alamgiri.

The Emperor decided to go there (Hassan Abdal) in person and started on 7th April 1674.

He reached Hassan Abdal on Friday the 26th June 1674. On Thursday the 23rd December 1675 he began the return journey. The first stage was Kalabagh. The Emperor arrived at the garden of Lahore on Friday the 26th January 1676. He left for Delhi on 24th February 1676 and reached Delhi on 27th March 1676.

Quoted by Dr. Fauja Singh (Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Punjab Past and Present. April 1975. P.140

a proof of his presence at Delhi¹⁰. In a learned article Kapoor Singh I.A.S has highlighted the confusion which has been created while converting the Hijra dates into the dates of English calendar.¹¹ B.S. Anand is of the view that the Emperor was present at Delhi and that the Guru was taken to the court more than once and that long discussions were held between him and the Emperor.¹² Pritam Singh Gill has reconstructed these discussions in a dialogue form.¹³ Surrinder Singh Johar has also presented a dramatised version of such conversation.¹⁴ A.S. Bagha has stated that Aurangzeb was in Delhi at the time of execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur and his personal prejudices mixed up with his vicarious functions while he sentenced the Guru to death."¹⁵ B.S. Gupta has also described Guru Tegh Bahadur's encounter with the Emperor.¹⁶

The present day writers who have written in English, had their predecessor in Max Arthur Macauliffe whose account of Guru Tegh Bahadur is based on the writings of the Sikh chroniclers. According to him the Guru was arrested at Agra. His arrest was reported to the Emperor who was overjoyed to hear the news of the arrest of the great priest of the Sikhs. He sent a regiment of twelve hundred horsemen to bring the Guru to Delhi. In Delhi the Guru was 'stationed in a haunted house on advice of the Qazis," that if he be kept in the haunted house, he shall most probably die. But if he survives, we shall behold his miraculous powers. If he desires not to enter the haunted house, let him accept Islam."¹⁷

(10) Dr. Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr*. P.303-304

(11) Kapoor Singh. 'Who Killed Guru Tegh Bahadur', *Sikh Review* Calcutta, Dec 1975.

(12) B.S. Anand. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. A Biography*. P.197 (1979)

(13) S.S. Johar. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. A Biography*. P.196 (1975)

(14) Pritam Singh Gill. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. A Unique Martyr* P.66-67 (1975)

(15) A.S. Bagha. *Palprasanvli*. P.102 (1975)

(16) B.S. Gupta. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. A Study*. P. 39

(17) Max Arthur Macauliffe *Life of Guru Tegh Bahadur*. Language Department. April 1971 P.50

The Emperor and his Mohammedan priests thought 'if the Guru died in the haunted house the Hindus should become afraid and readily accept Islam. If on the other hand the Guru survived, he should be so terribly terrified by what he saw overnight that he would become a willing convert. If, however, the Guru, through his supernatural power, felt no fear, then they would forcibly convert him.¹⁸

The Emperor said to the Guru:

"It is my pleasure that there should be but one religion. Hinduism is false and worthless and those who profess it shall suffer punishment in Hell. If of their own accord they keep the Id and fast and repeat the Mohammedan creed and prayers I will reward them with wealth, appointments, land revenue grants and land with irrigating wells. In this case thou too, shalt have many disciples and thou shalt become a great priest of Islam"

The Guru replied:-

"O Emperor, thou and I and all people must walk according to God's will. If it were the will of God that there should be only one religion, He would not have created Hindus and having created them would not have given them offsprings. He hath no partner and can do as He pleaseth. Neither thou nor I can oppose Him."¹⁹

When Aurangzeb persisted in his insistence that the Guru should accept Islam, he replied emphatically:-

'Hear O Aurangzeb, I will never embrace Islam. Thou and I are all the creatures and not the equals of God. The world is subject to Him. The great Prophet who originated the religion you professest was unable to impose one faith on the world, so how cans't thou do so...Even thy Prophet Mohammed was not able to

(18) Op cit. 17 P.51

(19) Op cit 17 P.53

convert his own uncle to Islam. Of what account art thou! '19A

In the folklore of community, specially when it concerns a legendary figure symbolising the hopes and aspirations of the people, fact and fiction mingle inextricably and preferences and prejudices of the people are crystalised into a fascinating mosaic of sentiment and emotion which plays no insignificant part in the formation of the psyche of a community. Despite the fact that the details are at variance with the facts, the tradition becomes a psychic fact with its own dynamic potentialities. The tradition thus becomes an inverted pyramid. It has for its foundation the kernel of truth on which is built the superstructure of facts and fantasies cemented by the mortar of popular perception.

The Sikh religious tradition regarding the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur suffers from many inaccuracies and contradictions. Ganda Singh has very correctly pointed out the short comings in the traditional account of the events leading to the persecution and execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. On the one hand we are told that the Guru courted death but would not agree to show miracles to prove his divinity. On the other, he is shown as going to the house of his disciples at will. Macauliffe tells us that the king was eager to keep the Guru in his custody. He had sent a contingent consisting of twelve hundred horsemen to bring the Guru from Agra to Delh.²⁰ But he does not contradict the traditional accounts of the imprisonment of the Guru at Delhi which show the disciples of the Guru visiting him whenever they felt like doing so. These accounts also speak of the Guru's having frequently gone out of the prison to dine with his Sikhs or bathe in the river Jamuna. Referring to 'Life of Guru Tegh Bahadur' by Bhai Narain

(19A) Macauliffe. *Life of Guru Tegh Bahadur*. Language Department Pb. April 1971, P.53

(20) Max Arthur Macauliffe. *Life of Guru Tegh Bahadur*. Language Department Punjab. P.50

Singh, he attributes this to the belief that the Guru had two bodies, one to be restrained by his jailors and the other to wander wherever he pleased. He also quotes Narain Singh to inform that the Emperor had accused the Guru of the indecency of looking at the harem of the Emperor from the roof of the mansion in which he had been imprisoned. He makes the Guru say:-

"Emperor Aurangzeb, I was on top story of the prison, but I was not looking at thy private apartments or at thy queens. I was looking in the direction of the Europeans who are coming from beyond the sea to tear down thy pardas and destroy thine empire"²¹

The disciples of a charismatic religious leader are likely to deify him. While doing so they are also bound to create contradictions and confusion. In their zeal to prove that the Guru, with his supernatural powers and divine attributes could not be done to death on the orders of the Emperor, they reduce his martyrdom to an act of suicide and self-immolation. Ganda Singh has extensively quoted from the works of early Sikh chroniclers to show how these chroniclers diminish the significance of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom by showing that the Guru was not actually beheaded by the official hangman. He had himself requested his disciples to put an end to his torture by severing his head from the body. The author of *Guru Bilas Patshahi Dass* (Koer Singh Kalal) says, that the Guru requested a Sikh to behead him so that his body is not defiled by the touch of a Turk (Muslim). Bhai Sukha Singh, the author of *Gur Bilas* says, 'The Sikh unsheathed his sword, severed the head from the body and disappeared.' Kesar Singh Chhiber, the author of *Bansavli Namah* tells us that the Guru asked a disciple from the East India to do the job. 'The Guru convinced the man. With a single stroke of the sword, the head was severed. The miracle was performed by the Lord himself. If the Lord had not put an end to his life the Turks might

(21) Op. Cit. 20.P. 54-55

have prolonged the torture and entertained many misgivings and hesitations.”²²

Obviously these contradictions in the traditional accounts of the martyrdom of the Guru result in making even the actual fact look incredible. But we must keep in mind the fact that the early Sikh historians did not have the training which makes for objectivity in historical narration. Furthermore they were the devotees of the Guru. Dr. Fauja Singh has correctly stated that in the Sikh tradition there has been a mix up of Guru's first arrest in 1665 when the Guru was arrested at Dhamdhn (near Jind in Haryana) with his subsequent arrest in 1675. To quote Dr. Fauja Singh:-

“It appears that some mixing up has taken place in this respect (Guru Tegh Bahadur's meetings with the Emperor and the discussions which took place during the course of these meetings). The tradition of their meetings has a sure basis but relates to an earlier occasion when in 1665 the Guru was arrested in Dhamdhan and produced at the Imperial Darbar at Delhi. Following Badshah Buranji (Author S.K. Bhuyan) we can say that even then the authorities had acted under a misapprehension and the Guru was sentenced to death after his persistent refusal to accede to the wishes of the Emperor in the matter of conversion or display of miracles.”²³

Dr. Fauja Singh's assessment is correct as is borne out by the account of Guru's martyrdom by Rai Bahadur Kanahaya Lal to which a reference has already been made. Rai Bahadur Kanahaya Lal clearly talks of the earlier arrest and states that at that time it was the intervention of Raja Ram Singh which averted the martyrdom of the Guru.

(22) Dr. Ganda Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur de Jiwan de Kuchh Wakiat Sabandhi Bhulekhe. From Guru Tegh Bahadur Smriti Granth- Ed. Satbir Singh. P.48-49

(23) Dr. Fauja Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.96

It also goes to the credit of the early Sikh writers on the Guru that they display an adequate awareness of the basic issues involved in Guru Tegh Bahadur's fight against theocracy and fanaticism. Their narration of the discussion between the Guru and the Emperor is a correct projection of the Sikh point of view regarding the undesirability of the state interfering in the religious affairs of the citizens. When they allude to the miraculous powers of the Guru, they undoubtedly project their own perception of the divinity of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Such a perception also implies a projection of the hopes of the people through their hero and saviour who promised to redeem them in an impossible situation by undertaking on their behalf the impossible task of defying the might of a seemingly invincible Emperor.

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

Tilak Janju Rakha Prabh Taaka

TILAK JANJU RAKHA PRABH TAAKA

The Lord protected their paste mark and sacred thread
 And in Kali Yuga performed a mighty deed
 To defend the righteous he spared no sacrifice;
 Gave away his head, but uttered not a groan.
 For defending righteousness he enacted this great deed,
 Sacrificed his life but not his ideal;
 He spurned the exhibition of theatrical acts of miracle
 mongering such as would shame devotees of God.
 Breaking the potsherd of his body on the head of the
 monarch of Delhi.
 He departed for the celestial realm
 None ever performed a noble deed like Tegh Bahadur.
 At Tegh Bahadur's departure the world was plunged in grief
 The world wailed
 But the celestial realms resounded with his glory.

Guru Gobind Singh
 (Bachitra Natak)

Guru Tegh Bahadur had become a legend in his own life time. He enjoyed the confidence of the ordinary people as well as the respect and reverence of the Indian elite. He was cast in a heroic mould. But his heroism was not the heroism of a mere warrior. He was a saintly soul. He combined courage with compassion. It was his love for the people which urged him to identify himself with the suffering people and it was his heroism which made it possible for him to stand by them and defy on their behalf, the might of a great empire. He had risen above the confines of ego and was willing to suffer for alleviating the sufferings of others.

The hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur give us a clear idea of his vision of life. He is aware of the transience of human existence and the Unreality of worldly possessions and human body.

The Sikh Gurus aimed at creating perfect human beings. This perfection is achieved through a detached participation in the affairs of the world. Men must rid themselves of the evil of aggrandizement and attachment but they must not renounce the world. The householder must aspire to be a yogi and the yogi should try to become an ideal householder. Spiritual perfection must help in improving the quality of life. The perfect man combines detachment with compassion.

Guru Tegh Bahadur has himself sketched the portrait of such a man. The perfect man, according to him, has the equipoise of a sage:-

He who grieves not in grief,
 From avarice pleasures and fears is free,
 And considers gold as good as dust;
 Who indulges not in slander and flattery
 And is immune to greed, attachment and vanity
 Who in happiness and sorrow self poised remains

Who discards all hopes and desires
Who lives detached from the world,
And is not affected by lust and wrath
In such a man shines the light of God.
The man who receives the Guru's grace,
discovers the secret of spiritual life
Sayeth Nanak, the soul of such a man blends,
with God, as water mingles with water.*

The heroism of Guru Tegh Bahadur was the heroism of such a sage. He was aware of the impermanence of human relations and the element of selfishness inherent in human behaviour:-

The world is ensnared, in personal pleasures
No one for others really cares
In prosperity friends gather around thee,
In adversity they turn back and flee
In misfortune no one will come near thee.

But when love is combined with detachment and man is able to overcome the urges of ego and desire for attachment, when greed gives way to renunciation, the realization dawns upon human beings that altruism is the true antidote to selfishness and steadfastness saves the human beings from the scare of impermanence. When we cease to live for ourselves only, we can live and even die for others. The heroism of a sage is the outcome of such a vision of life. Love ceases to be a mere desire for pleasure and possession. It becomes an urge to live and die for the beloved. Love thus creates the spirit for self sacrifice and liberates the human sensibility from the constraints of ego. Love thus becomes an antidote to selfishness. It liberates the human mind from fear. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, could clearly visualize this subtle

* Jo nar dukh mai dukh nahi mane. Guru Tegh Bahadur. A.G.633 English rendering by Dr. Trilochan Singh. Hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.101
Pritam jan leh man mahi. Guru Tegh Bahadur. AG. 634

connection between love and fearlessness. In his ascent to spiritual sublimity the seeker must give up his love for ego based relations, urges, aspirations and perceptions. The Guru had said, 'Embark upon the journey of love with your head placed on the palm of your hand'.

Writing about the attributes of a Giani (the Awakened Soul) Guru Tegh Bahadur says:

He who fears nor frightens anyone
Sayeth Nanak, listen O mind,
he alone is the true sage.*

Guru Tegh Bahadur was a fearless man but his fearlessness emanated from the equipoise of his enlightened soul. The Sikh Mool Mantra attributes freedom from fear and enmity to God. As a matter of fact fearlessness is possible only in the absence of animosities and enmity. The concept of duality is inherent in the concept of enmity. It creates the desire for domination. It promotes pride and encourages arrogance. Aurangzeb's desire for domination over the minds of men created disharmony. The Guru championed the cause of the Brahmins because he had compassion for them as they were the victims of injustice and oppression. His opposition to Aurangzeb did not imply that he was negatively oriented towards him and wanted to destroy him. This opposition was an expression of the Sikh concept of Dharm Yudh - a war for the preservation and perpetuation of the Pure Dharma.

His willingness to help the harassed Pandits was an integral part of his creative vision. The supreme sacrifice made by him was an epoch making event with immense creative potentialities. With his boundless courage, compassion and capacity to suffer for his convictions he shattered the fetters of fear which gripped the Indian mind and set into motion socio-spiritual forces which changed the course of history in the sub-continent.

* Bhai kahu kau det nahe, nahe bhai manat aan
Kahu Nanak sun re manna, giani tahe bikhan. AG. Sloka 33

On November 11, 1675 history was created not through territorial conquest but through a saintly soul's defiance of a mighty Emperor who believed in stamping out dissent with a view to achieve a steam-rolling uniformity. Emperor Aurangzeb wanted to entirely obliterate deviation from authorized opinion. He wished to destroy all other perceptions to establish the supremacy of the perception of men in power. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was a reminder to the mighty Emperor and all other votaries of absolute power of their limitations, their helplessness and the fetters which shackle their soul. The Guru, through his self-sacrifice, reminded men in power of the harm which lust for power causes to them as well as to the unfortunate people over whom they have acquired the power of life and death.

On this day, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, laid down his life at Chandni Chowk, Delhi to uphold the principles of religious tolerance enshrined in the concept of secularism. The Guru was a visionary, a mystic revolutionary, a singer of psalms, a charismatic leader of men. They flocked to him because they perceived in him their friend, philosopher and saviour. Such was their faith in him that they believed that a mere glance at his noble visage was enough to instil in them the courage to defy the orders of the unjust tyrannical political system headed by the mighty Emperor Aurangzeb.

Aware as he was of the transience of human life the Guru stood for the perennial principles which sustain life. Compassion incarnate, he stood by the persecuted people of India. He was against fanaticism and theocracy.

The concept of martyrdom involves moral choice.

The traditional chroniclers of Guru Tegh Bahadur, aware as they were, of the basic issues involved in the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, have placed the martyrdom of the Guru in the proper ideological context. Despite their adoration of the great Guru and their desire to embellish their accounts to deify

him, they have faithfully reported the choice which the orthodox Ulema offered to the Guru on behalf of the Emperor. The Guru was asked either to embrace Islam or show miracles to prove his divinity. If both the choices were unacceptable to him, he should be ready to face death. He accepted the third alternative. Being a man of inviolable integrity, the Guru could not consider the first alternative. Under no circumstances could he be tempted or coerced to change his faith or compromise with his basic perceptions. He had learnt to renounce the pleasures of life. Profit and possessions held no fascination for him. He could renounce life and make the supreme sacrifice for upholding the supremacy of the spirit of man.¹

The Sikh tradition tells us that the Guru did not allow his disciple to use supernatural power to destroy his tormentors.² According to Bhai Mani Singh (Sikhan di Bhagatmal) a Sikh came to the Guru and said, 'Master, if you allow me, I may destroy both Lahore and Delhi' The Guru said, 'you have just a drop out of the ocean of spiritual power, keep it with you. Do not grieve. Everything happens under God's will'³ Bhai Mani Singh also says that another Sikh came to the Guru and offered to him the proverbial philosopher's stone with the help of which he might buy his freedom but the Guru threw the stone into the river Jamuna⁴. Some of the prominent Sikhs of Delhi went to the Guru and sought his permission to buy his freedom by offering a huge amount as ransom.⁵ These Sikhs, it is said, collected Rs. one crore to give to the Qazi of Delhi so that he would agree to free the Guru. Such a practice

- (1) According to the author of Guru Pratap Surya Granth the Guru told the Qazi, when the earlier proposals were presented to him once again, "The loss of life, as you propose, is acceptable to me. "The man who shows miracles is just like a magician who shows magic tricks to earn his livelihood."
- (2) Satbir Singh. Bado Kalu mahe Saka. P.73
- (3) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur Prophet and Martyr. P.319-326
- (4) Op. cit. 3. P.315,325
- (5) Op. cit. 4. P 316

was not uncommon in those days. Important prisoners could be freed on payment of adequate amounts as ransom.⁶

These episodes, narrated in the popular Sikh tradition, point to the consternation and concern among the devotees and disciples of the Guru regarding his safety. These also highlight the determination, steadfastness and integrity of the Guru who could not be cowed down by threats of death, weakened by torture, or made to succumb to temptations. The Guru was not interested in his own survival and security. He was motivated by the highest altruistic impulses. He had offered himself to come to the rescue of the harassed Hindus who had sought refuge with him knowing fully well the consequences of his decision to help them. These episodes are a sure and authentic proof of the high reverence in which the Guru was held. Placed in this context, what appears to be the element of fiction and fantasy and an attempt at deifying a people's hero, is in fact a factual representation of the psyche of the people whose sentimental attachment to their leader and the perception of his spiritual and even supernatural powers had a great significance in socio-psychological, religious terms. The Guru thus became a symbol of the will of the people and an embodiment of the virtues of courage and confidence and fearlessness of death which they themselves would like to possess. The evolution of myth and the embellishment of fact with fantasy which is a part of the literary and imaginative reconstruction of reality, becomes a sure reflector of popular perceptions and aspirations. Such a reflection is also a proof of the extent to which the people have identified themselves with their hero whom they perceive as their protector. This process of identification imbues the hero with the strength of the people and in his own turn he infuses his admirers and devotees with courage and confidence and bestows upon them the indestructible strength which enables them to achieve the impossible. In the case of Guru Tegh Bahadur, this process of identification was the outcome of his inviolable integrity, absolute detachment, infinite compassion, altruism and fearlessness. He was a man who had attained the state of egolessness

(6) Satbir Singh. Bado Kaloo Mahe Saka. (Pb). P.68

but had the courage and capacity to accept the challenge of history in complete humility and objectivity. He possessed unshakable equipoise, was aware of his social responsibility but this awareness was the outcome of deep spiritual serenity.

Guru Tegh Behadur has left behind a legend that will live for ever and inspire men to transcend the confines of the immediate and to rise above the conflicting claims of theologies which threaten to tear the world asunder. He wanted human beings to subdue the myriad manifestations of senseless selfishness-individual, collective and institutional. He will for ever urge us to overcome the urges of ego, masquerading as national honour, religious zeal or acquisition of power. Pursuit of power always creates an illusion of strength. When an Emperor embarks on campaigns of conquest, he might be able to extend his territories and stun people into submission. But reckless pursuit of power is bound to instil fear in his own heart, raise the walls of his ego and blur his vision and make him an instrument of his downfall and destruction. Aurangzeb was the mightiest of the Mughal Emperors. He held sway over the whole of Hindustan and Afghanistan. But he was also the last. With his exit the Mughal power in India lost its glory.

Guru Tegh Bahadur had been prosecuted because he had promised to protect the right of the people of India to religious freedom. He tried to help the harassed Pandits from Kashmir because they had not been able to cope with the relentless persecution let loose by Iftikhar Khan, the Governor of Kashmir who was determined to forcibly convert the Hindu priests to Islam.

This decision was of great historical significance. It was a moral decision. The Guru had a moral view of history⁷ He had the freedom to choose between death, Islam and performing of miracles to prove his divinity. He was offered the exalted priesthood of Islam in the event of his becoming a Muslim. But he spurned the offer. He preferred death to debasement inherent in forced conversion. Such conversions

(7) B.S. Gupta. Guru Tegh Bahadur - A Study. P.38

negate the very concept of human dignity. By refusing to submit to the orders of the Emperor the Guru wanted to make him realise that it was impossible for him to turn India, the land of the infidels, into the land of the faithful.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's decision to help the Pandits was an expression of the unique richness and depth of his creative personality. It was made possible by his sublime awareness of his own freedom and moral responsibility and spontaneous willingness to suffer and sacrifice his life for mitigating the sufferings of others. This was unprecedented in human history.⁸

He refused to perform miracles to prove his divinity. This refusal was an integral part of the Sikh perception which equates miracles with display of magical power and a cheap assertion of the self.⁹ Magic operates from ego-centred consciousness whereas Sikhism believes in complete submission to the will of God. In Bachitra Natak Guru Gobind Singh has himself condemned miracle mongering in unequivocal terms.¹⁰ The Guru had the choice to either show miracles to prove his divinity or to face death. He remained faithful to his moral vision and felt that it was immoral to create an illusion of one's power over the material world. Manipulation of Maya was an idea which was not acceptable to him. He refused to show miracles. He also refused to embrace Islam.

The Guru was brought to the same spot in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, where his beloved disciples had been tortured to death, the previous day. They were subjected to the most barbarous torture and the Guru had been made to witness these men of unfathomable devotion and indestructible integrity, suffer with a rare sense of submission to the will of the Almighty but they

(8) B.S. Gupta. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. A Study.* P.38

(9) *Op. cit.* 8. P.39

(10) *Op. cit.* 8. P.38. Also see P.S. Gill. *Guru Tegh Bahadur The Unique Martyr.* P.107,112,113. The religious tradition does admit of the miraculous and the supernatural phenomenon but the Sikh tradition disapproves of it.

refused to submit to the will of their tormentors. The Imperial strategy was simple. The display of barbarity was aimed at instilling fear in the 'infidel' hearts. The persecutors wanted to overwhelm the Guru, destroy his resistance, demoralise him into giving up his resolve to stand by those who had sought refuge with him and asked for his protection.^{11A}

The strategy did not work. The Guru's persecutors were dealing with a man who had transcended the fear of death and could not be frightened by the prospect of torture. Pain and pleasure were the same to him. He believed in the reality of the soul and the impermanence of human body.

Know thy body to be transient O seers,
The spirit of God that resides within,
Know it to be true and real.
Why are you engrossed in glamorous illusion
of the World; a transient dream.¹¹

He had a vision of fearlessness rooted in his perception of the divine harmony permeating the universe. He had developed a sensibility which could see beyond the present and perceive the eternal embracing the ephemeral. Neither torture nor temptation could weaken his resolve. He refused to submit to coercion and by doing so proved that the human soul is stronger than the might of a powerful Empire.

The Fatwa was read by Abdul Wahab, Bohra. The Guru was beheaded by Jalal-ud-Din of Samana. Even in death the Guru raised his hand in benediction.

A large crowd of people had gathered at the site of Guru's execution because his impending execution had been

(11) Sadho Eh Tan Mithya Mano. AG.1186

(11A) Sher Singh Giani. Philosophy of Sikhism. P.111 The author is of the opinion that Guru Tegh Bahadur was able to face the scenes of horror because of his faith in the correctness of the will of God.

announced in the city with the beat of drums. The people were overwhelmed with grief. The Emperor had ordered his minions to behead their beloved leader whom they had perceived as their Saviour and who had all along been a source of spiritual solace. The Guru's martyrdom naturally cast gloom. In the words of Guru Gobind Singh;

When Guru Tegh Bahadur left for his heavenly abode
The world was plunged in grief
Struck with horror, the mortals cried with grief
The gods in the Heaven rejoiced and hailed the Lord¹²

These words of Guru Gobind Singh correctly reflect the mood of the people of Delhi. In popular perception the execution of the Guru must have appeared to be the tragic finale of their resistance to the reign of theocratic terror let loose by the Emperor. To further terrorise the people the Emperor had ordered that the dead body of the Guru should be desecrated. It should be cut into pieces and these pieces be hung on the different gates to the city to imprint on the minds of the opponents of the Emperor the invincibility of the Mughal might. According to Dr. Ganda Singh's translation of the relevant passage in Ghulam Hussain's account of Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution:

'Tegh Bahadur might be fettered and detained in prison. So this was done according to the order. After a few days another order about Tegh Bahadur was received saying that having executed him his body should be cut into a few pieces and these should be hung on different sides of the city.¹³

The Emperor's orders regarding the desecration of the body of the Guru could not be carried out. The Imperial design was frustrated by the devoted disciples of the Guru who risked their own life to save the mortal remains of their beloved leader

(12) Guru Gobind Singh, *Bachitra Natak*.

(13) *Punjab Past and Present*. April 75. Page X

from being dishonoured. By putting their rebellious intentions into action they showed that the sullen discontent among the victims of the discriminating policy of the Emperor had started crystallising into the sentiment of rebellion and that freeing themselves of the shackles of fear, people would revolt against tyranny. The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was thus the beginning of the end of the Mughal Empire.

The Sikh chroniclers are unanimous in their narration of the events that immediately followed the execution of the Guru although their accounts are at variance with one another in details. The author of *Bansavali Namah* says;

'It was Sammat 1732 Maghar Sudi Panjmi. Guru Tegh Bahadur left for his heavenly abode. There was a dust storm on that day.¹⁴

The author of *Panth Prakash* says 'When the head was severed there was such a dust storm that all had to close their eyes. "The author of *Suraj Prakash* also speaks of the dust storm as compelled all to close their eyes and nothing was visible to them." The watchmen and soldiers rushed into the Kotwali.¹⁵

According to *Guru Kian Sakhian*, four Sikhs of the Guru, (Bhai Jaita, Bhai Nanua, Bhai Uda and Bhai Gurditta) had entered into a pact to defy the orders of the Emperor in a meeting held at the house of Bhai Jaita in the Dilwali Street in Delhi (Chandni Chowk) Bhai Jaita had taken the decision that the head of the Guru should be removed from the site of execution immediately after the Guru had been executed and he accomplished the task with the help of his associates¹⁶, taking advantage of the confusion caused by the unprecedented dust storm. Rai Bahadur Kanahya Lal has said that Bhai Jaita's father asked his son to behead him and keep his head in place of the head of the Guru to confuse the authorities and to gain

(14) Quoted by Satbir Singh. *Bado Kalu mahe Saka*. P.73

(15) Satbir Singh. *Bado Kallu Mahe saka*. P.73-74

(16) Balwant Singh Anand. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. P.201 Also see Harbans Singh - *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. P.100-101.

time to make good his escape to Anandpur alongwith the holy head of the martyred Guru.¹⁷ In his account of the martyrdom of the Ninth Master Professor Puran Singh also takes an account of this episode.¹⁸ Maithli Sharn Gupt also alludes to this incident. He says, 'the old man recited the Japuji and severed his own head. The son was startled and made an obseance to his father and made good his escape with the head of the martyred Guru.'¹⁹

Another dangerous act of defiance was accomplished by Lakhi Shah Vanjara and his sons. Lakhi Shah was a devoted disciple of the Guru and belonged to the Labana tribe.

Lakhi Shah was a prosperous and influential merchant who supplied provisions to the Royal armies and had, as such, been to different parts of the country. He had his own armed escort to protect his caravans. Being a devout disciple of the Guru, he was agitated at the prospect of the desecration of the Guru's dead body. He made an impassioned appeal to his sons to help him in the holy task of saving the martyred Guru's body from defilement and dishonour. The plan to accomplish this task was carefully made and meticulously executed. He alongwith his sons and a large number of carts appeared on the scene of the execution of the Guru. As the convoy reached near the raised platform, it broke it's line and moved forward in a maddening frenzy as though the beasts were no longer under control. In the confusion caused in this manner and the dust raised by the movement of the caravan, people ran helter skelter and in the confusion the body of the martyred Guru was removed and taken to Lakhi Shah's village, Rai Sina. It was placed in the house of Lakhi Shah and at night he set his own house on fire to cremate the mortal remains of his Master.²⁰

(17) Rai Bahadur Kanahya Lal. Twarkih Punjab. Lahore. 1877 P. 27-32. Reproduced in Punjab past and present. April 75.

(18) Professor Puran Singh Punjab Past and present. April 75. P. 6-16

(19) Maithli Sharan Gupt. Guru Kul. P. 116.

(20) Balwant Singh Anand. Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Martyr. P. 200-205.

The story has its authentic evidence in an entry in the Bhat Vahi Jadavbansian.

Lakhia (Lakhi Shah or Lakhi Das) son of Godhu, Nighahia, Hema and Hari, sons of Lakhia...and Naik Dhuma, sons of Kahan, Tumar Bijlout, brought the body of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Ninth Guru...The body was cremated in the village of Raisina half a ghari before dawn.²¹

Bhai Jaita took the head of the martyred Guru and left for Anand Pur in the company of his two friends, Bhai Nanua and Bhai Uda. He passed through Bagpat, Traori (karnal) Ambala Grain mandi, Nabha Sahib, Chandigarh and Kiratpur. Bhai Udda went to Anandpur to inform Guru Gobind Singh. It was decided to perform the cremation at Anandpur. When Guru Gobind Singh heard the tale of martyrdom of Guru he was overwhelmed. He held Bhai Jaita in embrace and said, 'Rangrete Guru ke Bete.' Rangretas are Guru's own sons.²² The cremation was performed with great reverence by Guru Gobind Singh on 16 November 1675. Lakhi Shah and other Sikhs also came to Anandpur with the ashes of the mortal remains of the Guru. The Guru received them warmly and honoured them.²³

Bhai Jaita and his friends and Bhai Lakhi Shah and his sons displayed extraordinary courage in saving the mortal remains of the Guru from being defiled and dishonoured. By disobeying the order of the Emperor they defied the entire power of a mighty empire. Bhai Jaita belonged to the scavenger class. He was a sweeper by profession. He was a devoted disciple of the Guru.²⁴ Lakhi Shah was a prosperous trader. He was a prominent Sikh and had been closely connected with

(21) Bhatt Vahi Jadubansian. Quoted by Harbans Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.101

(22) Satbir Singh. Bado Kallu Mahe Saka. P.74-75

(23) Harbans Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur P.102 The author has based himself on information in Guru Kian Sakhian. by Sarup Singh Kaushish.

(24) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P. 321,323

the Sikh Gurus. He was a yadav Kshatrya of Badhtya clan²⁵ But his caste was not a part of the Indian social elite.²⁶ By embracing Bhai Jaita Guru Gobind Singh defied the Indian social system based on caste stratification. The success of the Sikh movement was owing to the fact that the Sikh Gurus had persistently emphasised on the concept of human equality and by doing so took the concept of human dignity to the Indian masses. They imbued the common people with a sense of courage and confidence. The act of defiance on the part of these apparently humble men whom centuries of rigid social stratification and discrimination so elaborately worked out by the Hindu spiritual elite (Brahmins) and warrior classes (Kashatryas) who had been for centuries partners in power, had conditioned them to perceive themselves as hewers of wood, drawers of water and scavengers, had great historical significance. These very men were to cast themselves in a new role under the impact of two hundred and fifty years of Sikh movement of social and spiritual awakening.

The dust storm at the time of the execution of the Guru, to which references have most frequently been made by the writers on Guru Tegh Bahadur was not exactly a supernatural phenomenon though the devout must interpret it as such. The imbalance involved in the act of the execution of a man of integrity and saintly sensibility, bearing no malice to any one, can be construed to have upset the cosmic order. professor Puran Singh, himself being a mystic, has such a perception when he says:-

‘There is a heart within everything and it is not mere poetry, but literally true in a higher sense, that just as men and women and children felt sorrowful at culpable deicide of Guruji, so did all objects of nature mourn the loss. For every true and great man is the man of whole Nature...The loss was not only of men but a

(25) Op. cit. 24. P.200.

(26) Op cit. 24. P.143

universal loss to the heart of the whole Nature. The trees, birds, animals, stones, walls, dogs, all literally share our sorrows and joys like friends and relatives. That man is frivolous who sees not this kinship.²⁷

The Sikh Gurus were mystics and had a deep perception of harmony between man and nature. Their perception visualised a relationship of harmony between man and God and man and man. Guru Tegh Bahadur himself was a visionary and his vision of oneness of mankind and his infinite compassion and love motivated him in identifying himself with suffering humanity. The Guru was a mystic. But he did not aim at personal salvation only. He did not seek escape into the other-worldly citadels of spiritual speculation, He was compassion incarnate. When he saw people groaning under the tyranny of an oppressive theocracy he made up his mind to come to their rescue and laid down his life in their defence. A visionary as he was, he had overcome the fear of death. The wealth of the world had no fascination for him. Imperial anger could not deter him from his resolve. 'What is torture or death or warth of kings when to our inner ears the angels are already singing of victory. How could the prospect of defeat deter him when he could see victory in defeat itself.'²⁸To quote Puran Singh once again:

"What can injury or fire do us, or swords, when we see beings made of light take us in their embrace and support us in our faith that we all are His and He is ours and all is made of light and song and joy."²⁹

Such is the power of the human spirit that even in apparent annihilation it seeks eternity and secures it, discerns victory in death and scores it. It rises against the might of the seemingly

(27) Prof. Puran Singh. The life and Teachings of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur the Ninth King Spiritual. Published by Bhai Amar Singh Lahore, 1908. Reproduced in Punjab Past and Present. April. 1975. P.1-16.

(28) Professor Puran Singh. Ten Masters. P.80

(29) Op. cit. 28 P.80

invincible and subdues them. It sees the invisible and achieves the impossible. Such was the spiritual strength of Guru Tegh Bahadur that he could redeem men beyond redemption, salvage situations beyond solution, and kindle hope in hearts overwhelmed with the darkness of despair and make heroes out of men stunned into submission through endless oppression and atrocities.

Perceived in the broad socio-spiritual and political context, the dust storm has a symbolic significance. It symbolised chaos. But within this chaos a new phenomenon was unfolding itself. And this phenomenon had immense creative potentialities. Thus dust storm (specially the dust raised by the oxen in the convoy of Lakhi Shah) signalled the beginning of the end of the Imperial might of the Mughals. Macauliffe has been accused (and correctly) of wrongly representing the Guru as prophesying the destruction of the Imperial might of the Mughals at the hands of a foreign power (English). But keeping in view the psychological state of mind of the people, specially those who were the admirers of the Guru, the victims of the theocratic oppression of Aurangzeb must have fervently longed for the dissolution of the Mughal Empire. The heroic deeds of Bhai Jaita and his friends and Lakhi Shah and his sons signalled the emergence of the Indian psyche from a mood of sullen submission, with a view to resurrect itself. These disciples of the Guru would not allow the mortal remains of their martyred leader to be dishonoured and defiled. It was obvious that they had acquired the strength to protect their own honour and identity.

MARTYRDOM OF THREE DEVOTED DISCIPLES

Guru Tegh Bahadur attained martyrdom on 11th November 1675. Three of his devotees, Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dayala had been tortured to death a day earlier on the very spot on which the Guru was martyred. In the words of Suniti Kumar Chatterji;

‘These four deaths were the most heinous crimes against humanity condemning those responsible for these deaths, to obloquy and shame for all time...On the other hand those who suffered from these deaths were the most glorious martyrs in the history of man.’¹

Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dayala, all the three of them were men of inviolable integrity, indestructible devotion and courage of conviction. They were tortured to death in full view of Guru Tegh Bahadur and a horror stricken crowd of citizens. The imperialist strategy was to stun the people into submission to the commands of the theocratic state headed by Aurangzeb who was bent upon forcing the ‘infidels’ into embracing Islam and turning this country into Dar-ul-Islam.

The savagery of the medieval state was directed against these saintly souls with a view to instil fear in the heart of Guru Tegh Bahadur. But the Guru was determined to frustrate the Emperor’s design to deprive the people of India of their fundamental right to religious freedom.

These brave men were the constant companions, friends and advisers of the Guru. He held them in the highest esteem. He was sure of their absolute commitment to the ideals enshrined in the Sikh tradition and their complete loyalty to him. He had full faith in their capacity to face with honour and dignity the wrath of their persecutors. Their heroic defiance

(1) Suniti Kumar Chatterji. *The Sikh Review* Calcutta December. 1975.
P. 96

of the tormentors justified the faith which the Guru had reposed in them. These brave men who remained loyal to the Guru till their last breath, had insisted to accompany him to Delhi to share his ordeals and afflictions. Like him they too had transcended the fear of death. They too had acquired the spiritual equanimity. Pleasure and pain were the same to them. Such was their devotion and dedication to their leader, that they would share death with him. They were literally loyal to the ideal set by the Second Guru when he said,

Die before the man you love
leaves the world.
Fie upon life on this earth
When the loved one has departed.²

The martyrdom of these great disciples of the Guru was a fitting finale to a tradition of distinguished dedicated service to the house of Guru Nanak which was destined to defy the might of the Mughal Empire. This tradition of loyalty and devotion had been nurtured by generations of their forefathers who had firm faith in the great Gurus and served them with distinction. They had thus imbibed the essence of the Sikh spiritual tradition which believes in the sovereignty of human soul and stands against all forms of coercion.

Bhai Mati Das and Sati Das were brothers. They were nephews of Bhai Durgha Mal who was Dewan of Guru Har Kishan. These brothers belonged to a Brahmin (Chhiber) family of village Kariala, District Jhilm (West Pakistan) This village is situated at a distance of about ten kilometers from Chakwal on the road to Katas Raj the famous centres of Hindu pilgrimage.³ One of their ancestors, Mahatma Gautam had become a disciple of Guru Arjan who had conferred on him the title, Bhai. The great grand father of Mati Das and Sati Das

(2) Jis piare sion nehu tis age mar chalye. Dhrig Jiwan sansar, tanke pachhe jiwna. A.G. P. 84

(3) Dr. Harnam Singh Shan. Guru Tegh Bahadur de Sanmukh shahid hoye Sikh. Guru Tegh Bahadur Smriti Granth. P.91

was a devoted disciple of Guru Har Gobind and had taken part in the battles fought by the Guru against the Mughal chiefs. He was a commander of a contingent in Guru's army. He had died fighting against the Mughal Commander Mukhalas Khan in 1628.⁴

Their father Hira Nand was a distinguished disciple of Guru Har Rai.

It has been stated by some chroniclers that Bhai Mati Das could not tolerate the ill treatment meted out to the Guru and sought his permission to destroy the Mughal empire and burn the city of Delhi.⁵ Bhai Mani Singh, however, attributes this story to a Sikh who came to the Guru⁶. This story is a part of the Sikh lore. The author of *Mehma Naumi Patshahi ki* says,

'Mati Das was the Dewan of the Guru. He was an ideal Sikh. The Guru had favoured him with his blessings. His mind was filled with anger. The conversation between the Emperor and Guru had made him unhappy. He said to the Guru, 'If you permit me I may show my supernatural powers to these people. This King is the enemy of the saints. Let blood gush forth from the skulls of these evil men and let all see this spectacle. I have made up my mind that the detractor and tormentor of the Guru must be destroyed.'

The Guru, however said to Mati Das:-

"This man has power. Let him do as he wishes. Let him take my life. Men of God do not show miracles. As a man sows, so shall he reap. The man of knowledge never shows miracles. He submits to the will of God."⁷

(4) Op. cit. 3. P. 91

(5) Surrinder Singh Johar. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. P. 203

(6) Dr. Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr*. P.326

(7) Saroop Das Bhalla *Mehma Naumi Patshahi ki Bhasha Vibhag Patiala*. 1971. P.676-680

This conversation between the Guru and Mati Das, according to the author of *Mehma Nomi Patshahi ki*, was reported to the Emperor. The Emperor felt enraged. He called Bhai Mati Das and ordered that he should be sawn alive.⁸ The author of *Guru Pratap Surya Granth* also records that Mati Das was sawn alive.⁹ Bhai Mati Das was tied between two wooden blocks. It is said that even when his body was cut into two he continued to recite the Sikh morning prayer, *Japuji*.¹⁰

Both Mati Das and Sati Das were present at Bakala when the ninth Guru was annointed.¹¹ They accompanied the Guru throughout his journeys. It is said that Bhai Sati Dass used to record the hymns and discourses of the Guru. These were seized by the authorities. Like his brother he too was given the choice between death and Islam. He declined to embrace Islam and courted death. Whereas Mati Das was the first Sikh to attain martyrdom, Satti Das was the third. He was killed in an equally inhuman manner. His body was chopped into pieces, limb by limb. Some chroniclers, however, think that his body was wrapt in cotton and he was burnt alive.¹²

Bhai Dayal Das too belonged to a family with traditions of dedicated service to the Gurus. His grand father Bhai Balu laid down his life in Guru Har Gobind's battle against the Mughals in 1628 A.D. Bhai Dayal Das had ten brothers all of whom excepting Amar Chand, sacrificed their lives to sustain the Sikh movement. Bhai Dayal Das was born at Alipur (Muzzafar Garh. West Pakistan).¹³ His father Mai Das was a government functionary in the reign of Shah Jahan. He came to Kartarpur in 1657 and placed the service of three of his

(8) Ibid.7

(9) *Guru Pratap Surya Granth*. Mahakavi Santokh Singh.

(10) Dr. Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur Prophet and Martyr*. P.326

(11) Op cit. 10. P.319

(12) Fauja Singh (*Guru Tegh Bahadur*) states that Sati Das was burnt alive.

13) Dr. Harnam Singh Shan. *Guru Tegh Bahadur de Sanmukh Shahid Hoyal Sikh*. *Guru Tegh Bahadur Smriti Granth*. Ed. Satbir Singh P.92

eldest sons at the disposal of Guru Har Rai.¹⁴ At that time Bhai Dayal Das was fifteen years of age.¹⁵ He became a distinguished disciple of Guru Har Kishan. He was present at Bakala at the time of the installation of Guru Tegh Bahadur as the ninth Guru of the Sikhs. He enjoyed complete confidence of the Guru, and looked-after his household. When the Guru was attacked by the hirelings of Dhir Mal, he had risked his own life to provide physical cover to the Guru. Alongwith his valiant brothers he had fought against the men sent by Shiha Masand.¹⁷ When the Guru embarked upon his travels in the East he made Bhai Dayal Das incharge of the household arrangements. Bhai Dayal Das's association with the Guru was so close that he represented the Guru in his absence. In a letter which the Guru addressed to the Sangat at Banaras from Monghyr, the Guru said, 'Obey what Bhai Dayal says. Sikhs will be blessed.'¹⁸ Bhai Dayal Das was with the Guru when he was arrested at Dhamdhan.¹⁹

The author of Bansavali Namah Dassan Patshahian has created doubts by saying that only two persons were killed by Aurangzeb alongwith the Guru:-

Only two Sikhs were killed with the Lord,
They were Dewan Mati Das and Sati Das
The one was killed after the other
No other Sikh accompanied them.

But in the presence of the evidence recorded in Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi there can be no doubt regarding the martyrdom of Bhai Dayal Das. It clearly records:-

(14) Op cit 13 P.93

(15) Ajit Singh Bagha. Pal Prasanvali. P.109. Bhai Dayal Das was born in 1642

(16) P.S. Padam. Guru Tegh Bahadur de Shardhalu Sikh te Snehi Guru Tegh Bahadur Jiwan Sandesh te Shahdat. P.194

(17) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P.219

(18) Op cit. 16. P. 192

(19) Op. cit. 16. P. 192

"Bhai Dayal Das, grandson of Balu, great grand son of Moola, was killed alongwith Guru on Maghar Sudi Pachmi Samat 1732 at Delhi. Mati Das, Sati Das sons of Hira Nand, grandsons of lakhi Das and great grand sons of Prag, family of Gautam Saraswati Brahmins were also killed.^{19A}

According to the Sikh tradition, when Mati Das was sawn vertically Bhai Dayal Das remarked, 'The Mughals have sawn asunder the Mughal empire.'²⁰ These remarks provoked his persecutors into tying his hands and feet and throwing him into a cauldron of boiling oil.

Before these fearless followers of the Guru had their tryst with destiny, the Guru had blessed them and said, "All my blessings are with you my noble disciples. What greater joy and pride can I have than the thought that my dearest disciples are with me"²¹

The Sikhs have accorded the place of highest honour to these martyrs. They have proved that the calculations of their persecutors that the savage treatment meted out to these brave men will intimidate the opponents of a thoughtless theocratic state into submission, were wrong. The memory of these martyrs has become the anchor of the Sikh spiritual tradition of resistance to tyranny. By referring to them in their daily prayer the Sikhs have turned their resistance to oppression, into an everlasting source of inspiration.

The martyrdom of Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dayal Das has a significance in terms of the impact of the Sikh movement on the Indian psyche, which has not been taken note of even by those writers on Sikh history who have interpreted it as a peoples' movement. The people of India, specially those of Punjab, had been subjected to more than six centuries of suppression at the hands of the ruthless invaders.

(19A) Op. cit 19. P.192

(20) Fauja Singh Guru Tegh Bahadur. P.102

(21) Dr. Harnam Singh Shan. Guru Tegh Bahadur de Sanmukh Shahid hoye Sikh. Guru Tegh Bahadur Smriti Granth P.103

Punjab had been annexed by Mahmud Ghazni in 1026 with the death of the last Shahi king Trilochana Pala. During these six and a half centuries not a single significant victory was won by the non-muslims. Naturally the series of defeats had a demoralising impact on the minds of the people and compelled them to completely surrender to the military and even the moral authority of their oppressors as a large number of people in the conquered territories had embraced Islam - the religion of their conquerors. The Sikh movement was not an anti-Muslim movement. But it was definitely against forcible conversions. It did prepare the people of Punjab to protest against the injustice to which they were being subjected.

The fact that these disciples of the Guru were able to resist torture and temptations and were willing to even lay down their lives in defence of the right of the Hindus to have religious freedom symbolised the psychological preparedness of the people of India to resist the might of the Muslim theocracy. This transformation of the people from being submissive subjects ready to survive under any humiliating conditions into alert and vigilant people, conscious of their self-respect and ready to defend their honour even at the cost of their lives was wrought as a result of the efforts of the Sikh Gurus. They morally elevated the people, made them conscious of the higher principles of life and instilled in them the courage to resist tyranny even though such resistance meant loss of life.

The martyrdom of these men of courage and conviction had another dimension. In the feudal set up, the soldiers fought for the victory and glory of their leaders and fled the battlefield when their leader fell. In this case the followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur appear to have internalised their source of inspiration. They fought and died for their convictions. Of course the inspiration for the cultivation of these convictions came from their mentor, their spiritual leader, Guru Tegh Bahadur. But the heroism displayed by them did carry the assurance that even when the Guru was no longer present to guide his followers, the spirit which these followers had imbibed, would spur them to deeds of great valour and nobility.

IMPACT - IMMEDIATE AND ULTIMATE

On November 11, 1675, it must have been quite obvious to the people of India that the Mughal arms had triumphed over the infidels whose leader had been done to death on orders from the almighty emperor Aurangzeb. The state had triumphed over the human urge for freedom and dignity. A man had risen against the might of an Empire but had been crushed to death alongwith his faithful followers. Everything was in its place. The system still worked. Defiance was just not possible. The state had clearly asserted its authority.

All the same, the supreme sacrifice, of a man of God, who had risen to rescue the innocent, harassed Hindus from the sad predicament did send shock waves through Punjab¹. It did not stun the followers of the Guru into demoralisation, surrender and submission. It strengthened the perception on the part of his followers and multitudes of admirers that non-violent resistance to the iconoclastic zeal of the Emperor was of no avail. They felt that it was impossible to secure a just and honourable dispensation.²

The martyrdom of the Guru did not evoke visible, volatile wide-spread reaction. The undercurrents of consternation did not become the rumblings of revolt. There was a solitary incident of protest. On 27th October 1676 when the Emperor was returning from Jama Masjid and was about to board a boat, an angry follower of the Guru, hurled two bricks at him to register his protest. It was a symbolic act of defiance and an indication of the rising tide of anger against the Emperor. It was, in a way, symbolic of the ascendancy of the Sikh militancy against the Mughal tyranny.³

(1) Hari Ram Gupta. History of the Sikhs. P.219

(2) Op. cit. 1. P.219

(3) Dr. Trilochan Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur. Prophet and Martyr. P.324. Also see Guru Tegh Bahadur di Shahidi de Parnam, by Gurbux Singh. (Guru Tegh Bahadur Smriti Granth. P.107-114

So far as Aurangzeb was concerned, the martyrdom of the Guru did not dampen his anti-infidel activities. He continued to follow his religious policies with even greater zeal and continued to attack the citadels of Hinduism with remarkable relentlessness.

Pilgrim tax was imposed in 1679⁴. Jizya was reimposed in the same year.⁵ It was an attempt to humiliate the Hindu elite. It meant a complete reversal of the policy of religious reconciliation pursued by Aurangzeb's predecessors, specially Akbar.

Abu Talib was sent to the friendly state of Jaipur and he reported that he had demolished 66 temples at Amber.⁶ During his march to Deccan the Emperor ordered the destruction of all the temples en-route.⁷

He celebrated his victory over Golkanda by destroying temples at Hyderabad. In 1692 he ordered that the temple at Rasulpur should be destroyed. Hiteshwar Mandir at Barnagar in Gujarat was destroyed in 1693. In 1696-97 temples in Sorath (Gujarat) were demolished. He stopped the public worship of idols at Dwarka.⁸

In 1707 Hindus were not allowed to burn their dead on the banks of river Sabarmati at Ahmedabad.⁹ Such was his intolerance of the 'infidel' Hindus that he issued orders to the Jagirdar of Mustaffabad to disallow Hindus to offer worship there as it offended the religious sensibilities of the Muslim paralytics who went there for a cure.¹⁰

Fireworks of all kinds were prohibited as per Fatwa-e-Alamgiri. Excepting Rajputs and Marathas, Hindus were not

(4) M.P. Srivastava. Policies of Great Mughals. P.109

(5) Op Cit. 4. P.109

(6) Shri Ram Sharma Religious policy of Mughal Emperors. P.177

(7) Op. cit. 6. P.177

(8) Op. cit. 6. P.182

(9) Op. cit. 6. P.182

(10) Op. cit. 6. P.182

allowed to ride Iraqi and Turani horses or elephants or use planquins.¹¹

Aurangzeb did not appoint any Hindu to high office after the death of Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh.¹²

Neither Aurangzeb nor his advisers could realise the importance of the far reaching consequences of the pursuit of a religious policy which simply created discord among the people, bred disaffection and corroded the very support structure which had sustained the Mughal dynasty for more than two centuries. As compared to the Mughals, the earlier Muslim dynasties had a very short span of life. The Lodis ruled over India for only seventy five years. The rule of the Sayyads could last for only thirty seven years. (1414-51) The Tughlaq dynasty ruled for almost a century (94 years. 1321-1414) The Khalji dynasty could survive only for thirty years. (1290-1321).

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was the outcome of Aurangzeb's policy of converting India-the land of 'infidels' into an Islamic country. In retrospect it is obvious to the students of history, that this policy was responsible for the destruction of not only the Mughal dynasty but also the Islamic state which had existed in India for the last eight centuries.¹³ The Rajputs and the Sikhs, the two martial communities rose in fierce opposition to the Mughals,¹⁴ who were later on weakened by a series of Abdali invasions, the rise of the Marathas and the consolidation of the English power in India. The dragon's seeds sown in Delhi in the blood of martyred Guru Tegh Bahadur, brought to harvest an abundant crop.¹⁵ By his pursuit of the policy of intolerance, Aurangzeb had forged the instrument of his own destruction and left for his successors a legacy of anarchy and annihilation.

(11) Op. cit. 9. P.182

(12) M.P. Shrivastava. *Policies of Great Mughals*. P.107

(13) Hari Ram Gupta. *History of the Sikhs*. P.338

(14) Jadu Nath Sarkar. *Aurangzeb*. (Hindi) P.129

(15) J.N. Gordon. *The Sikhs*. P.36. Quoted by P.S. Nijjar Punjab under the Mughals. P.103

“The great iconoclast’s work like that of Akbar was not finished with his death. He had undermined the foundation of the Mughal Empire. He had created a new instrument for breaking it down”¹⁶

He did not even succeed in polarising the Indian people or the political elite on purely communal lines. Life with its multi-dimensional compulsions proved stronger than his fanaticism. Despite enthusiastic efforts during a long political career, he could not create sharply demarcated political and religious monoliths. Nor could he obliterate the composite (though feudal) character of the Indian polity. Hindus continued fighting under the Muslim banner and Muslims (Pathans from the Western frontiers of the empire, and the Muslim States of Deccan) fought against the Muslim Emperor Aurangzeb who was bent upon the establishment of a glorious Islamic state. Rajputs fought for Aurangzeb and against the Marathas and lesser Chiefs from among the Marathas fought against Shivaji under the Imperial banner. Despite the fact that Shivaji symbolised in himself the assertion of the Hindu will for power, Muslim soldiers fought for him. Was this feudal phenomenon not a negation of Emperor’s thesis? Did it not prove that it was futile to think in terms of monoliths and that life could not be organised into clear cut compartments of perception and sentiment? Human resilience is stronger than the life denying impulse of intolerance.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur hastened the process of the disintegration of the Mughal empire. It turned the tide in the history of the Sikhs and of Punjab.¹⁷ It was the beginning of the end of the Mughal empire in India.

The position of the Sikh community at the time of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was rather precarious. Guru Gobind Singh was only nine years old. The Sikhs had to face a challenge from an intolerant, all powerful Emperor. The Sikhs

(16) E.B. Havell. History of India. P.177

(17) Hari Ram Gupta. History of the Sikhs. P.219

had been in disarray after Guru Har Gobind. They had been persecuted by the Mughal Emperors. Guru Har Gobind's confrontation with the Mughal state was a departure from the earlier practice of the Gurus.¹⁸ With the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sikhism was threatened root and branch.¹⁹

The Sikhs perceived the danger to their existence and had to take recourse to arms in self-defence. The history of Sikhism and the character of its votaries made it impossible that the Sikhs should become a fraternity of spiritual recluses absorbed in meditation. A negative impact of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was the decline of Sikh movement in East India which Guru Tegh Bahadur had nurtured with great love and care.²⁰

The historians of the time did not take notice of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom. But by ordering the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur the Emperor had initiated a process of great importance which transformed the Sikhs into a fraternity of saint soldiers. To the Sikhs it appeared that non-violent resistance to political tyranny and religious fanaticism was not of much avail. A similar perception had gained ground after the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev, who it is believed, instructed the sixth Guru to make preparations for self-defence.²¹ At that time Guru Har Gobind was only eleven years old.²² At the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom Guru Gobind Singh was nine years old.²³ It is said that when the Head of the martyred Guru was brought to Anandpur, The Guru vowed to take revenge. J.N. Sarkar has observed that Guru Gobind Singh was

(18) G.S. Mansukhani *Aspects of Sikhism*. P.153

(19) A.C. Bannerji. *From Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh*. P.65

(20) A.C. Bannerji. *From Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh*. P.65

(21) *Opp. Cit.* 20. P.165-66

(22) Surrinder Singh Johar. *Guru Tegh Bahadur* P.24

(23) According to Ganda Singh Satbir Singh, Fauja Singh, Guru Gobind Singh was fifteen years of age. See. Article Correct date of birth of Guru Gobind Singh. By G.B. Singh. D.R. Narang Khera. Dec. 1989

not the person to leave his father's death unavenged.²⁴ The Sikh tradition also attributes such motives to the Guru.

Writing about the consequences of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, Malcolm has observed that the history of the Sikhs after Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution assumes another aspect. They were no longer a sect believing in self defence only.²⁵ Shri Ram Sharma has also expressed a similar opinion. The martyrdom was not as easily forgiven as that of the fifth Guru's martyrdom.²⁶

The martyrdom did lead to a change in Sikh perception. The Sikhs now justified the oppressed people's right to take to arms to revolt against a tyrannical system. To resort to sword is legitimate in defence of Dharma and self-respect, but the sword should be used only after all other means have been exhausted.²⁷

For the Sikhs this martyrdom proved a baptism of fire. It helped Guru Gobind Singh to transform them into a band of fiery fighters²⁸ with the legendary phoenix like capacity for survival and resurrection.

But this transformation was not motivated by revenge as Malcolm perceives:-

"The Sikhs stung by a deep sense of injuries listened to the Guru with all the ardour of men commencing a military career of glory. They listened with rapture to a son glowing, with vengeance against the murderers of his father who taught a doctrine suited to his troubled state of mind, called upon his followers by every feeling of manhood, to lay aside their peaceable habits, to graft the resolute courage of the soldier on the enthusiasm

(24) J.N.Sarkar. Aurangzeb. (Hindi) P.225

(25) Malcolm - Sketch of Sikhs. P.33

(26) Shri Ram Sharma. Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors P.177-82

(27) Guru Gobind Singh. Zaffar Namah. (When all other means fail, it is justified to take recourse to sword)

(28) Op. cit.26 P.166

of the devotee to swear eternal war with the cruel and haughty Mohammedans."²⁹

This perception is not compatible with the Sikh view of life. It does not conform with the personality and character of Guru Gobind Singh. Such a perception separates Sikh militancy from Sikh spirituality.

The creation of the Khalsa was one of the most important consequences of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The devotees of the Guru were transformed into saint soldiers, who were to fight, not for the satisfaction of the elemental impulse of revenge but for the establishment of a just socio-political dispensation, not for grabbing power but for the overthrow of an unjust theocratic system. The fraternity of the fearless Khalsa was to consist of men who believed in being fearless without frightening others³⁰ The motivation for their struggle was rooted in a heightened spiritual sensibility. Their struggle cannot be perceived in terms of Hindu-Muslim confrontation or the establishment of a Sikh theocracy in place of a Muslim theocracy.

Moral decay is responsible for the ultimate eclipse of a socio-political system. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries it was the political and social apathy of the people which was responsible for the downfall of the Hindu medieval India. The successive waves of invasions and frequent defeats had demoralised the people of India and they had come to accept their fate with a sense of resignation.³¹

The most important consequence of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was the creation of a spirit of socio-religious-political awakening which demolished the attitude of apathy on the part of the Indian people. The Guru had dedicated himself to the task of creating this awareness and for this

(29) Malcolm. Sketch of the Sikhs. P.32-33

(30) Bhai Kahu kau det nahin na bhai manat aan
Guru Tegh Bahadur. A.G. 1427

(31) C.V. Vaidya. Medieval Hindu India. P.125

purpose he undertook the tour of Punjab, Haryana and Eastern India. His martyrdom resulted in galvanising the spiritually awakened people into a fearless fighting force which turned the tide of the history of the Sikhs and of Punjab.³² and that of India too. The supreme sacrifice made by the Guru inculcated among the people respect for all religions.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, led to the creation of the Khalsa, defiance of the Mughal authority and the creation of a secular state under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After almost twenty centuries of subjugation to the non-Panjabis the people of Punjab became the arbiters of their own fate:-

"It may be said that for twenty centuries from the time of Porus down to the time of Ranjit Singh Punjab had no kings of its own. It was ruled by foreign Hindu and Malechh rulers from the time of Alexander to that of Mahmut; by Macedonians, by Mauryas, by Kushans, by Huns, by Kashmirians, by Sindhis and lastly by the Shahi kings of Kabul, and after Mohammed by the Mohammedan kings of Ghazni and Delhi for eight centuries till the Sikhs gave to Punjab native kings after a foreign rule of over two thousand years."³³

And the state under Ranjit Singh was a secular state, in keeping with the anti-theocratic movement initiated by Guru Nanak and sanctified by the martyrdom of Sikh Gurus and numberless Sikh men, women and children. This movement ultimately succeeded in upholding the time honoured Indian ideals of religious tolerance rooted in the basic secular perception of the validity of different religions as means to the achievement of purification of human consciousness.

(32) Hari Ram Gupta. History of the Sikhs. P.219

(33) C.V. Vaidya. Medieval Hindu India. P.125

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